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HERBERT

THE STORY OF THE

THE HISTORY OF THE

IN THE HISTORY OF THE

VOL 2



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HENRY DUNBAR

THE STORY OF AN OUTCAST

BY THE AUTHOR OF

“LADY AUDLEY’S SECRET”

ETC. ETC. ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES

VOL. I.



LONDON

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Dedication

THIS STORY IS INSCRIBED

TO

JOHN BALDWIN BUCKSTONE, ESQ.

IN


SINCERE ADMIRATION OF HIS GENIUS

AS A

DRAMATIC AUTHOR

AND

POPULAR ACTOR



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PREFACE.

THE Author of "Henry Dunbar" has to make the same appeal to the critics which has been made by an eminent novelist on a previous occasion, namely, not to describe the plot. The story of "Henry Dunbar" pretends to be nothing more than a story, the revealment of which is calculated to weaken the interest of the general reader, for whose amusement the tale is written.

So much has been said about sensation novels, and their influence upon the tone of current literature, that the Author feels it right to recall to the memory of her

readers the memorable declaration of Daniel Defoe: "Throughout this book this fundamental is most strictly adhered to : there is not a wicked action in any part of it, but it is, first or last, rendered unhappy or unfortunate ; there is not a superlative villain brought upon the stage, but he is either brought to an unhappy end, or brought to be a penitent ; there is not an ill thing mentioned, but it is condemned even in the relation ; nor a virtuous, just thing, but it carries its praise along with it:" and to request that her book may be judged by that standard.

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HENRY DUNBAR.

CHAPTER I.

AFTER OFFICE HOURS IN THE HOUSE OF DUNBAR,
DUNBAR, AND BALDERBY.

THE house of Dunbar, Dunbar, and Balderby, East-India bankers, was one of the richest firms in the city of London—so rich that it would be quite in vain to endeavour to describe the amount of its wealth. It was something fabulous, people said. The offices were situated in a dingy and narrow thoroughfare leading out of King-William Street, and were certainly no great things to look at; but the cellars below their offices—wonderful cellars, that stretched far away underneath the church of St. Gundolph, and were only separated

by party-walls from the vaults in which the dead lay buried—were popularly supposed to be filled with hogsheds of sovereigns, bars of bullion built up in stacks like so much fire-wood, and impregnable iron safes crammed to overflowing with bank bills and railway shares, government securities, family jewels, and a hundred other trifles of that kind, every one of which was worth a poor man's fortune.

The firm of Dunbar had been established very soon after the English first grew powerful in India. It was one of the oldest firms in the City; and the names of Dunbar and Dunbar, painted upon the door-posts, and engraved upon shining brass plates on the mahogany doors, had never been expunged or altered: though time and death had done their work of change amongst the owners of that name.

The last heads of the firm had been two brothers, Hugh and Percival Dunbar; and Percival, the younger of these brothers, had lately died at eighty years of age, leaving his only son, Henry Dunbar, sole inheritor of his enormous wealth.

That wealth consisted of a splendid estate in Warwickshire ; another estate, scarcely less splendid, in Yorkshire ; a noble mansion in Portland Place ; and three-fourths of the bank. The junior partner, Mr. Balderby, a good-tempered, middle-aged man, with a large family of daughters, and a handsome red-brick mansion on Clapham Common, had never possessed more than a fourth share in the business. The three other shares had been divided between the two brothers, and had lapsed entirely into the hands of Percival upon the death of Hugh.

On the evening of the 15th of August 1850, three men sat together in one of the shady offices at the back of the banking-house in St. Gundolph Lane.

These three men were Mr. Balderby, a confidential cashier called Clement Austin, and an old clerk, a man of about sixty-five years of age, who had been a faithful servant of the firm ever since his boyhood.

This man's name was Sampson Wilmot.

He was old, but he looked much older than

he was. His hair was white, and hung in long thin locks upon the collar of his shabby bottle-green greatcoat. He wore a greatcoat, although it was the height of summer, and most people found the weather insupportably hot. His face was wizen and wrinkled, his faded blue eyes dim and weak-looking. He was feeble, and his hands were tremulous with a perpetual nervous motion. Already he had been stricken twice with paralysis, and he knew that whenever the third stroke came, it must be fatal.

He was not very much afraid of death, however: for his life had been a joyless one, a monotonous existence of perpetual toil, unrelieved by any home joys or social pleasures. He was not a bad man, for he was honest, conscientious, industrious, and persevering. He lived in a humble lodging, in a narrow court near the bank, and went twice every Sunday to the church of St. Gundolph.

When he died, he hoped to be buried beneath the flagstones of that City church, and to lie cheek by jowl with the gold in the cellars of the bank.

The three men were assembled in this gloomy private room after office hours, on a sultry August evening, in order to consult together upon rather an important subject, namely, the reception of Henry Dunbar, the new head of the firm.

This Henry Dunbar had been absent from England for five-and-thirty years, and no living creature now employed in the bank, except Sampson Wilmot, had ever set eyes upon him.

He had sailed for Calcutta five-and-thirty years before, and had ever since been employed in the offices of the Indian branch of the bank; first as clerk, afterwards as chief and manager. He had been sent to India because of a great error which he had committed in his early youth.

He had been guilty of forgery. He, or rather an accomplice employed by him, had forged the acceptance of a young nobleman, a brother officer of Henry Dunbar's, and had circulated forged bills of accommodation, to the amount of three thousand pounds.

These bills were taken up and duly honoured

by the heads of the firm. Percival Dunbar gladly paid three thousand pounds as the price of his son's honour. That which would have been called a crime in a poorer man was only considered an error in the dashing young cornet of dragoons, who had lost money upon the turf, and was fain to forge his friend's signature rather than become a defaulter.

His accomplice, the man who had actually manufactured the fictitious signatures, was the younger brother of Sampson Wilnot, who had been a few months prior to that time engaged as messenger in the banking-house—a young fellow of nineteen, little better than a lad; a reckless boy, easily influenced by the dashing soldier who had need of his services.

The bill-broker who discounted the bills speedily discovered their fraudulent nature; but he knew that the money was safe.

Lord Adolphus Vanlorme was a customer of the house of Dunbar and Dunbar; the bill-brokers knew that *his* acceptance was a forgery: but they knew also that the signature of the drawer, Henry Dunbar, was genuine.

Messrs. Dunbar and Dunbar would not care to see the heir of their house in a criminal dock.

There had been no hitch, therefore, no scandal, no prosecution. The bills were duly honoured; but the dashing young officer was compelled to sell his commission, and begin life afresh as a junior clerk in the Calcutta banking-house.

This was a terrible mortification to the high-spirited young man.

The three men assembled in the quiet room behind the bank on this oppressive August evening were talking together of that old story.

"I never saw Henry Dunbar," Mr. Balderby said; "for, as you know, Wilmot, I didn't come into the firm till ten years after he sailed for India; but I've heard the story hinted at amongst the clerks in the days when I was only a clerk myself."

"I don't suppose you ever heard the rights of it, sir," Sampson Wilmot answered, fumbling nervously with an old horn snuff-box and a red cotton handkerchief, "and I doubt if any one knows the rights of that story except me, and I can remem-

ber it as well as if it all happened yesterday—aye, that I can—better than I remember many things that really did happen yesterday.”

“Let’s hear the story from you, then, Sampson,” Mr. Balderby said. “As Henry Dunbar is coming home in a few days, we may as well know the real truth. We shall better understand what sort of a man our new chief is.”

“To be sure, sir, to be sure,” returned the old clerk. “It’s five-and-thirty years ago,—five-and-thirty years ago this month, since it all happened. If I hadn’t good cause to remember the date because of my own troubles, I should remember it for another reason, for it was the Waterloo year, and City people had been losing and making money like wildfire. It was in the year ’15, sir, and our house had done wonders on ’Change. Mr. Henry Dunbar was a very handsome young man in those days—very handsome, very aristocratic-looking, rather haughty in his manners to strangers, but affable and free-spoken to those who happened to take his fancy. He was very extravagant in all his ways; generous and open-handed with money;

but passionate and self-willed. It's scarcely strange he should have been so, for he was an only child; he had neither brother nor sister to interfere with him; and his uncle Hugh, who was then close upon fifty, was a confirmed bachelor,—so Henry considered himself heir to an enormous fortune."

"And he began his career by squandering every farthing he could get, I suppose?" said Mr. Balderby.

"He did, sir. His father was very liberal to him; but give him what he would, Mr. Percival Dunbar could never give his son enough to keep him free of gambling debts and losses on the turf. Mr. Henry's regiment was quartered at Knightsbridge, and the young man was very often at this office, in and out, in and out, sometimes twice and three times a week; and I expect that every time he came, he came to get money, or to ask for it. It was in coming here he met my brother, who was a handsome lad—aye, as handsome and as gentlemanly a lad as the young cornet himself; for poor Joseph—that's my brother, gentlemen—had been educated a bit above his station, being

my mother's favourite son, and fifteen years younger than me. Mr. Henry took a great deal of notice of Joseph, and used to talk to him while he was waiting about to see his father or his uncle. At last he asked the lad one day if he'd like to leave the bank, and go and live with him as a sort of confidential servant and amanuensis, to write his letters, and all that sort of thing. 'I shan't treat you altogether as a servant, you know, Joseph,' he said, 'but I shall make quite a companion of you, and you'll go about with me wherever I go. You'll find my quarters a great deal pleasanter than this musty old banking-house, I can tell you.' Joseph accepted this offer, in spite of every thing my poor mother and I could say to him. He went to live with the cornet in the January of the year in which the fabricated bills were presented at our counter."

"And when were the bills presented?"

"Not till the following August, sir. It seems that Mr. Henry had lost five or six thousand pounds on the Derby. He got what he could out of his father towards paying his losses, but he

could not get more than three thousand pounds; so then he went to Joseph in an awful state of mind, declaring that he should be able to get the money in a month or so from his father, and that if he could do any thing just to preserve his credit for the time, and meet the claims of the vulgar City betting fellows who were pressing him, he should be able to make all square afterwards. Then, little by little, it came out that he wanted my brother, who had a wonderful knack of imitating any body's handwriting, to forge the acceptance of Lord Vanlorne. 'I shall get the bills back into my own hands before they fall due, Joe,' he said; 'it's only a little dodge to keep matters sweet for the time being.' Well, gentlemen, the poor foolish boy was very fond of his master, and he consented to do this wicked thing."

"Do you believe this to be the first time your brother ever committed forgery?"

"I do, Mr. Balderby. Remember he was only a lad, and I daresay he thought it a fine thing to oblige his generous-hearted young master. I've seen him many a time imitate the signature of this

firm, and other signatures, upon a half-sheet of letter-paper, for the mere fun of the thing : but I don't believe my brother Joseph ever did a dishonest action in his life until he forged those bills. He hadn't need have done so, for he was only eighteen at the time."

"Young enough, young enough!" murmured Mr. Balderby compassionately.

"Ay, sir, very young to be ruined for life. That one error, that one wicked act was his ruin ; for though no steps were taken against him, he lost his character, and never held his head up in an honest situation again. He went from bad to worse, and three years after Mr. Henry sailed for India, my brother, Joseph Wilmot, was convicted, with two or three others, upon a charge of manufacturing forged Bank-of-England notes, and was transported for life."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Mr. Balderby ; "a sad story,—a very sad story. I have heard something of it before, but never the whole truth. Your brother is dead, I suppose."

"I have every reason to believe so, sir," an-

swered the old clerk, producing a red cotton handkerchief and wiping away a couple of tears that were slowly trickling down his poor faded cheeks. "For the first few years of his time, he wrote now and then, complaining bitterly of his fate; but for five-and-twenty years I've never had a line from him. I can't doubt that he's dead. Poor Joseph!—poor boy!—poor boy! The misery of all this killed my mother. Mr. Henry Dunbar committed a great sin when he tempted that lad to wrong; and many a cruel sorrow arose out of that sin, perhaps to lie heavy at his door some day or other, sooner or later, sooner or later. I'm an old man, and I've seen a good deal of the ways of this world, and I've found that retribution seldom fails to overtake those who do wrong."

Mr. Balderby shrugged his shoulders.

"I should doubt the force of your philosophy in this case, my good Sampson," he said; "Mr. Dunbar has had a long immunity from his sins. I should scarcely think it likely he would ever be called upon to atone for them."

"I don't know, sir," the old clerk answered;

“ I don’t know that. I’ve seen retribution come very late, very late ; when the man who committed the sin had well nigh forgotten it. Evil trees bear evil fruit, Mr. Balderby : the Scriptures tell us that ; and take my word for it, evil consequences are sure to come from evil deeds.”

“ But to return to the story of the forged bills,” said Mr. Austin, the cashier, looking at his watch as he spoke.

He was evidently growing rather impatient of the old clerk’s rambling talk.

“ To be sure, sir, to be sure,” answered Simpson Wilmot. “ Well, you see, sir, one of the bills was brought to our counter, and the cashier didn’t much like the look of my lord’s signature, and he took the bill to the inspector, and the inspector said, ‘ Pay the money, but don’t debit it against his lordship.’ About an hour afterwards the inspector carried the bill to Mr. Percival Dunbar, and directly he set eyes upon it, he knew that Lord Vanlorme’s acceptance was a forgery. He sent for me to his room ; and when I went in, he was as white as a sheet, poor gentleman. He

handed me the bill without speaking, and when I had looked at it, he said—

“ ‘ Your brother is at the bottom of this business, Sampson. Do you remember the half-sheet of paper I found on a blotting-pad in the counting-house one day ; half a sheet of paper scrawled over with the imitation of two or three signatures ? I asked who had copied those signatures, and your brother came forward and owned to having done it, laughing at his own cleverness. I told him then that it was a fatal facility, a fatal facility ; and now he has proved the truth of my words by helping my son to turn forger and thief. That signature must be honoured, though I should have to sacrifice half my fortune to meet the demands upon us. Heaven knows to what amount such paper as that may be in circulation. There are some forged bills that are as good as genuine documents ; and the Jew who discounted these knew that. If my son comes into the bank this morning send him to me.’ ”

“ And did the young man come ? ” asked the junior partner.

“ Yes, Mr. Balderby, sir ; in less than half an hour after I left Mr. Percival Dunbar’s room, in comes Mr. Henry, dashing and swaggering into the place as if it was his own.

“ ‘ Will you please step into your father’s room, sir ? ’ I said ; ‘ he wants to see you very particular.’

“ The cornet’s jaw dropped, and his face turned ghastly white, as I said this ; but he tried to carry it off with a swagger, and followed me into Mr. Percival Dunbar’s room.

“ ‘ You needn’t leave us, Sampson,’ said Mr. Hugh, who was sitting opposite his brother at the writing-table. ‘ You may as well hear what I have to say. I wish somebody whom I can rely upon to know the truth of this business, and I think we may rely upon you.’

“ ‘ Yes, gentlemen,’ I answered ; ‘ you may trust me.’

“ ‘ What’s the meaning of all this ? ’ Mr. Henry Dunbar asked, pretending to look innocent and surprised ; but it wouldn’t do, for his lips trembled so, that it was painful to watch him. ‘ What’s the matter ? ’ he asked.

“ Mr. Hugh Dunbar handed him the forged bill.

“ ‘ This is what’s the matter,’ he said.

“ The young man stammered out something in the endeavour to deny any knowledge of the bill in his hand ; but his uncle checked him. ‘ Do not add perjury to the crime you have already committed,’ he said. ‘ How many of these are in circulation ?’

“ ‘ How many ?’ Mr. Henry repeated, in a faltering voice.

“ ‘ Yes,’ his uncle answered ; ‘ how many—to what amount ?’

“ ‘ Three thousand pounds,’ the cornet replied, hanging his head. ‘ I meant to take them up before they fell due, Uncle Hugh,’ he said. ‘ I did, indeed ; I stood to win a hatful of money upon the Liverpool Summer Meeting, and I made sure I should be able to take up those bills : but I’ve had the devil’s own luck all this year. I never thought those bills would be presented ; indeed, I never did.’

“ ‘ Henry Dunbar,’ Mr. Hugh said, very so-

lemnly, ‘nine men out of ten, who do what you have done, think what you say you thought: that they shall be able to escape the consequences of their deeds. They act under the pressure of circumstances. They don’t mean to do any wrong—they don’t intend to rob any body of a sixpence. But that first false step is the starting-point upon the road that leads to the gallows; and the worst that can happen to a man is for him to succeed in his first crime. Happily for you, detection has speedily overtaken you. Why did you do this?’

“The young man stammered out some rambling excuse about his turf losses, debts of honour which he was compelled to pay. Then Mr. Hugh asked him whether the forged signature was his own doing, or the work of any body else. The cornet hesitated for a little, and then told his uncle the name of his accomplice. I thought this was cruel and cowardly. He had tempted my brother to do wrong, and the least he could have done would have been to try to shield him.

“One of the messengers was sent to fetch poor Joseph. The lad reached the banking-house in

an hour's time, and was brought straight into the private room, where we had all been sitting in silence, waiting for him.

“He was as pale as his master, but he didn't tremble, and he had altogether a more determined look than Mr. Henry.

“Mr. Hugh Dunbar taxed him with what he had done.

“‘Do you deny it, Joseph Wilmot?’ he asked.

“‘No,’ my brother said, looking contemptuously at the cornet. ‘If my master has betrayed me, I have no wish to deny any thing. But I daresay he and I will square accounts some day.’

“‘I am not going to prosecute my nephew,’ Mr. Hugh said; ‘so, of course, I shall not prosecute you. But I believe that you have been an evil counsellor to this young man, and I give you warning that you will get no character from me. I respect your brother Sampson, and shall retain him in my service, in spite of what you have done; but I hope never to see your face again. You are free to go; but have a care how you tamper with

other men's signatures, for the next time you may not get off so easily.'

"The lad took up his hat, and walked slowly towards the door.

" 'Gentlemen—gentlemen!' I cried, 'have pity upon him. Remember he is little more than a boy; and whatever he did, he did out of love for his master.'

"Mr. Hugh shook his head. 'I have no pity,' he answered, sternly; 'his master might never have done wrong but for him.'

"Joseph did not say a word in answer to all this; but when his hand was on the handle of the door, he turned and looked at Mr. Henry Dunbar.

" 'Have you nothing to say in my behalf, sir,' he said, very quietly; 'I have been very much attached to you, sir, and I don't want to think badly of you at parting. Haven't you one word to say in my behalf?'

"Mr. Henry made no answer. He sat with his head bent forward upon his breast, and seemed as if he dared not lift his eyes to his uncle's face.

" 'No!' Mr. Hugh answered, as sternly as

before, 'he has nothing to say for you. Go; and consider this a lucky escape.'

"Joseph turned upon the banker, with his face all in a crimson flame, and his eyes flashing fire. 'Let *him* consider it a lucky escape,' he said, pointing to Mr. Henry Dunbar, 'let *him* consider it a lucky escape, if when we next meet he gets off scot free.'

"He was gone before any body could answer him.

"Then Mr. Hugh Dunbar turned to his nephew.

"'As for you,' he said, 'you have been a spoilt child of fortune, and you have not known how to value the good things that Providence has given you. You have begun life at the top of the tree, and you have chosen to fling your chances into the gutter. You must begin again, and begin this time upon the lowest step of the ladder. You will sell your commission, and sail for Calcutta by the next ship that leaves Southampton. To-day is the 23d of August, and I see by the Shipping Gazette, that the Oronoko sails on the 10th

of September. This will give you little better than a fortnight to make all your arrangements.'

"The young cornet started from his chair as if he had been shot.

" 'Sell my commission!' he cried; 'go to India. You don't mean it, Uncle Hugh; surely you don't mean it. Father, you will never compel me to do this.'

"Percival Dunbar had never looked at his son since the young man had entered the room. He sat with his elbow resting upon the arm of his easy-chair and his face shaded by his hand, and had not once spoken.

"He did not speak now, even when his son appealed to him.

" 'Your father has given me full authority to act in this business,' Mr. Hugh Dunbar said. 'I shall never marry, Henry, and you are my only nephew, and my acknowledged heir. But I will never leave my wealth to a dishonest or dishonourable man, and it remains for you to prove whether you are worthy to inherit it. You will have to begin life afresh. You have played the

man of fashion, and your aristocratic associates have led you to the position in which you find yourself to-day. You must turn your back upon the past, Henry. Of course you are free to choose for yourself. Sell your commission, go to India, and enter the counting-house of our establishment in Calcutta as a junior clerk; or refuse to do so, and renounce all hope of succeeding to my fortune or to your father's.'

"The young man was silent for some minutes, then he said, sullenly enough—

"'I will go. I consider that I have been harshly treated; but I will go.'"

"And he did go?" said Mr. Balderby.

"He did, sir," answered the clerk, who had displayed considerable emotion in relating this story of the past. "He did go, sir,—he sold his commission, and left England by the *Oronoko*. But he never took leave of a living creature, and I fully believe that he never in his heart forgave either his father or his uncle. He worked his way up, as you know, sir, in the Calcutta counting-house, and by slow degrees rose to be manager of

the Indian branch of the business. He married in 1831, and he has an only child, a daughter, who has been brought up in England since her infancy, under the care of Mr. Percival."

"Yes," answered Mr. Balderby, "I have seen Miss Laura Dunbar at her grandfather's country seat. She is a very beautiful girl, and Percival Dunbar idolised her.—But now to return to business, my good Sampson. I believe you are the only person in this house who has ever seen our present chief, Henry Dunbar."

"I am, sir."

"So far so good. He is expected to arrive at Southampton in less than a week's time, and somebody must be there to meet him and receive him. After five-and-thirty years' absence he will be a perfect stranger in England, and will require a business man about him to manage matters for him, and take all trouble off his hands. These Anglo-Indians are apt to be indolent, you know, and he may be all the worse for the fatigues of the overland journey. Now, as you know him, Sampson, and as you are an excellent man of busi-

ness, and as active as a boy, I should like you to meet him. Have you any objection to do this?"

"No, sir," answered the clerk; "I have no great love for Mr. Henry Dunbar, for I can never cease to look upon him as the cause of my poor brother Joseph's ruin; but I am ready to do what you wish, Mr. Balderby. It's business, and I'm ready to do any thing in the way of business. I'm only a sort of machine, sir—a machine that's pretty nearly worn out, I fancy, now,—but as long as I last you can make what use of me you like, sir. I'm ready to do my duty."

"I am sure of that, Sampson."

"When am I to start for Southampton, sir?"

"Well, I think you'd better go to-morrow, Sampson. You can leave London by the afternoon train, which starts at four o'clock. You can see to your work here in the morning, and reach your destination between seven and eight. I leave every thing in your hands. Miss Laura Dunbar will come up to town to meet her father at the house in Portland Place. The poor girl is very anxious to see him, as she has not set eyes upon him since

she was a child of two years old. Strange, isn't it, the effect of these long separations? Laura Dunbar might pass her father in the street without recognising him, and yet her affection for him has been unchanged in all these years."

Mr. Balderby gave the old clerk a pocket-book containing six five-pound notes.

"You will want plenty of money," he said, "though, of course, Mr. Dunbar will be well supplied. You will tell him that all will be ready for his reception here. I really am quite anxious to see the new head of the house. I wonder what he's like, now. By the way, it's rather a singular circumstance that there is, I believe, no portrait of Henry Dunbar in existence. His picture was painted when he was a young man, and exhibited in the Royal Academy; but his father didn't think the likeness a good one, and sent it back to the artist, who promised to alter and improve it. Strange to say, this artist, whose name I forget, delayed from day to day performing his promise, and at the expiration of a twelvemonth left England for Italy, taking the young man's portrait

with him, amongst a lot of other unframed canvasses. This artist never returned from Italy, and Percival Dunbar could never find out his whereabouts, or whether he was dead or alive. I have often heard the old man regret that he possessed no likeness of his son. Our chief was handsome, you say, in his youth?"

"Yes, sir," Sampson Wilmot answered, "he was very handsome—tall, and fair, with bright blue eyes."

"You have seen Miss Dunbar: is she like her father?"

"No, sir. Her features are altogether different, and her expression is more amiable than his."

"Indeed! Well, Sampson, we won't detain you any longer. You understand what you have to do?"

"Yes, sir, perfectly."

"Very well, then. Good night! By the bye, you will put up at one of the best hotels at Southampton—say the Dolphin—and wait there till the Electra steamer comes in. It is by the Electra that Mr. Dunbar is to arrive. Once more, good evening!"

The old clerk bowed and left the room.

“Well, Austin,” said Mr. Balderby, turning to the cashier, “we may prepare ourselves to meet our new chief very speedily. He must know that you and I cannot be entirely ignorant of the story of his youthful peccadilloes, and he will scarcely give himself airs to us, I should fancy.”

“I don’t know that, Mr. Balderby,” the cashier answered; “if I am any judge of human nature, Henry Dunbar will hate us because of that very crime of his own, knowing that we are in the secret, and will be all the more disagreeable and disdainful in his intercourse with us. He will carry it off with a high hand, depend upon it.”

CHAPTER II.

MARGARET'S FATHER.

THE town of Wandsworth is not a gay place. There is an air of old-world quiet in the old-fashioned street, though dashing vehicles drive through it sometimes on their way to Wimbledon or Richmond Park.

The sloping roofs, the gable-ends, the queer old chimneys, the quaint casement windows, belong to a bygone age ; and the traveller, coming a stranger to the little town, might fancy himself a hundred miles away from boisterous London ; though he is barely clear of the great city's smoky breath, or beyond the hearing of her myriad clamorous tongues.

There are lanes and byways leading out of that humble High Street down to the low bank of the river ; and in one of these, a pleasant place enough, there is a row of old-fashioned semi-detached cot-

tages, standing in small gardens, and sheltered by sycamores and laburnums from the dust, which in dry summer weather lies thick upon the narrow roadway.

In one of these cottages a young lady lived with her father; a young lady who gave lessons on the piano-forte, or taught singing, for very small remuneration. She wore shabby dresses, and was rarely known to have a new bonnet; but people respected and admired her, notwithstanding; and the female inhabitants of Godolphin Cottages, who gave her good-day sometimes as she went along the dusty lane with her well-used roll of music in her hand, declared that she was a lady bred and born. Perhaps the good people who admired Margaret Wentworth would have come nearer the mark if they had said that she was a lady by right divine of her own beautiful nature, which had never required to be schooled into grace or gentleness.

She had no mother, and she had not even the memory of her mother, who had died seventeen years before, leaving an only child of twelve months old for James Wentworth to keep.

But James Wentworth, being a scapegrace and a reprobate, who lived by means that were a secret from his neighbours, had sadly neglected this only child. He had neglected her, though with every passing year she grew more and more like her dead mother, until at last, at eighteen years of age, she had grown into a beautiful woman, with hazel-brown hair, and hazel eyes to match.

And yet James Wentworth was fond of his only child, after a fashion of his own. Sometimes he was at home for weeks together, a prey to a fit of melancholy; under the influence of which he would sit brooding in silence over his daughter's humble hearth for hours and days together.

At other times he would disappear, sometimes for a few days, sometimes for weeks and months at a time; and during his absence Margaret suffered wearisome agonies of suspense.

Sometimes he brought her money; sometimes he lived upon her own slender earnings.

But use her as he might, he was always proud of her, and fond of her; and she, after the way of womankind, loved him devotedly, and

believed him to be the noblest and most brilliant of men.

It was no grief to her to toil, taking long weary walks and giving tedious lessons for the small stipends which her employers had the conscience to offer her; they felt no compunction about bargaining and haggling as to a few pitiful shillings with a music-mistress who looked so very poor, and seemed so glad to work for their paltry pay. The girl's chief sorrow was, that her father, who to her mind was calculated to shine in the highest station the world could give, should be a reprobate and a pauper.

She told him so sometimes, regretfully, tenderly, as she sat by his side, with her arms twined caressingly about his neck. And there were times when the strong man would cry aloud over his blighted life, and the ruin which had fallen upon his youth.

"You're right, Madge," he said sometimes, "you're right, my girl. I ought to have been something better; I ought to have been, and I might have been, perhaps, but for one man—but

for one base-minded villain, whose treachery blasted my character, and left me alone in the world to fight against society. You don't know what it is, Madge, to have to fight that battle. A man who began life with an honest name, and fair prospects before him, finds himself cast, by one fatal error, disgraced and broken, on a pitiless world. Nameless, friendless, characterless, he has to begin life afresh, with every man's hand against him. He is the outcast of society. The faces that once looked kindly on him, turn away from him with a frown. The voices that once spoke in his praise, are loud in his disfavour. Driven from every place where once he found a welcome, the ruined wretch hides himself among strangers, and tries to sink his hateful identity under a false name. He succeeds, perhaps, for a time, and is trusted, and being honestly disposed at heart, is honest: but he cannot long escape from the hateful past. No! In the day and hour when he is proudest of the new name he has made, and the respect he has won for himself, some old acquaintance, once a friend, but now an enemy, falls across his pathway. He is

recognised; a cruel voice betrays him. Every hope that he had cherished is swept away from him. Every good deed that he has done is denounced as the act of a hypocrite. Because he once sinned he can never do well. *That* is the world's argument."

"But not the teaching of the gospel," Margaret murmured. "Remember, father, who it was that said to the guilty woman, 'Go, and sin no more.'"

"Ay, my girl," James Wentworth answered, bitterly, "but the world would have said, 'Hence, abandoned creature! go, and sin afresh; for you shall never be suffered to live an honest life, or herd with honest people. Repent, and we will laugh at your penitence as a shallow deception. Weep, and we will cry out upon your tears. Toil and struggle to regain the eminence from which you have fallen; and when you have nearly reached the top of that difficult hill, we will band ourselves together to hurl you back into the black abyss.' That's what the *world* says to the sinner, Margaret, my girl. I don't know much of the gospel;

I have never read it since I was a boy, and used to read long chapters aloud to my mother, on quiet Sunday evenings; I can see the little old-fashioned parlour now as I speak of that time; I can hear the ticking of the eight-day clock, and I can see my mother's fond eyes looking up at me every now and then. But I don't know much about the gospel now; and when you, poor child, try to read it to me, there's some devil rises in my breast, and shuts my ears against the words. I don't know the gospel, but I *do* know the world. The laws of society are inflexible, Madge; there is no forgiveness for a man who is once found out. He may commit any crime in the calendar, so long as his crimes are profitable, and he is content to share his profits with his neighbours. But he mustn't be found out."

Upon the 16th of August 1850, the day on which Sampson Wilmot, the banker's clerk, was to start for Southampton, James Wentworth spent the morning in his daughter's humble little sitting-room, and sat smoking by the open window, while Margaret worked beside a table near him.

The father sat with his long clay pipe in his mouth, watching his daughter's fair face, as she bent over the work upon her knee.

The room was neatly kept, but poorly furnished, with that old-fashioned spindle-legged furniture which seems peculiar to lodging-houses. Yet the little sitting-room had an aspect of simple rustic prettiness, which is almost pleasanter to look at than fine furniture. There were pictures, —simple water-colour sketches,—and cheap engravings on the walls, and a bunch of flowers on the table, and between the muslin curtains that shadowed the window you saw the branches of the sycamores waving in the summer wind.

James Wentworth had once been a handsome man. It was impossible to look at him and not perceive as much as that. He might, indeed, have been handsome still, but for the moody defiance in his eyes, but for the half-contemptuous curve of his firmly-moulded upper lip.

He was about fifty-three years of age, and his hair was gray; but this gray hair did not impart a look of age to his appearance. His erect figure,

the carriage of his head, his dashing, nay, almost swaggering walk, all belonged to a man in the prime of middle age. He wore a beard and thick moustache of grizzled auburn. His nose was aquiline, his forehead high and square, his chin massive. The form of his head and face denoted force of intellect. His long, muscular limbs gave evidence of great physical power. Even the tones of his voice, and his manner of speaking, betokened a strength of will that verged upon obstinacy.

A dangerous man to offend ! A relentless and determined man ; not easily to be diverted from any purpose, however long the time between the formation of his resolve and the opportunity of carrying it into execution.

As he sat now watching his daughter at her work, the shadows of black thoughts darkened his brow, and spread a sombre gloom over his face.

And yet the picture before him could have scarcely been unpleasing to the most fastidious eye. The girl's face, drooping over her work, was very fair. The features were delicate and

statuesque in their form; the large hazel eyes were very beautiful—all the more beautiful, perhaps, because of a soft melancholy that subdued their natural brightness; the smooth brown hair rippling upon the white forehead, which was low and broad, was of a colour which a duchess might have envied, or an empress tried to imitate with subtle dyes compounded by court chemists. The girl's figure, tall, slender, and flexible, imparted grace and beauty to a shabby cotton dress and linen collar, that many a maid-servant would have disdained to wear; and the foot visible below the scanty skirt was slim and arched as the foot of an Arab chief.

There was something in Margaret Wentworth's face, some shade of expression, vague and transitory in its nature, that bore a likeness to her father; but the likeness was a very faint one, and it was from her mother that the girl had inherited her beauty.

She had inherited her mother's nature also: but mingled with that soft and womanly disposition there was much of the father's determina-

tion, much of the strong man's force of intellect and resolute will.

A beautiful woman—an amiable woman; but a woman whose resentment for a great wrong could be deep and lasting.

“Madge,” said James Wentworth, throwing his pipe aside, and looking full at his daughter, “I sit and watch you sometimes till I begin to wonder at you. You seem contented and almost happy, though the monotonous life you lead would drive some women mad. Have you no ambition, girl?”

“Plenty, father,” she answered, lifting her eyes from her work, and looking at him mournfully; “plenty—for you.”

The man shrugged his shoulders and sighed heavily.

“It's too late for that, my girl,” he said; “the day is past—the day is past and gone—and the chance gone with it. You know how I've striven, and worked, and struggled; and how I've seen my poor schemes crushed when I had built them up with more patience than perhaps man ever

built before. You've been a good girl, Margaret—a noble girl; and you've been true to me alike in joy and sorrow—the joy's been little enough beside the sorrow, poor child—but you've borne it all; you've endured it all. You've been the truest woman that was ever born upon this earth, to my thinking; but there's one thing in which you've been unlike the rest of your sex.”

“And what's that, father?”

“You've shown no curiosity. You've seen me knocked down and disgraced wherever I tried to get a footing; you've seen me try first one trade and then another, and fail in every one of them. You've seen me a clerk in a merchant's office; an actor; an author; a common labourer, working for a daily wage; and you've seen ruin overtake me whichever way I've turned. You've seen all this, and suffered from it; but you've never asked me why it has been so. You've never sought to discover the secret of my life.”

The tears welled up to the girl's eyes as her father spoke.

“If I have not done so, dear father,” she an-

swered gently, "it has been because I knew your secret must be a painful one. I have lain awake night after night, wondering what was the cause of the blight that has been upon you and all you have done. But why should I ask you questions that you could not answer without pain? I have heard people say cruel things of you; but they have never said them twice in my hearing." Her eyes flashed through a veil of tears as she spoke. "Oh, father,—dearest father!" she cried, suddenly throwing aside her work, and dropping on her knees beside the man's chair, "I do not ask for your confidence if it is painful to you to give it; I only want your love. But believe this, father,—always believe this,—that, whether you trust me or not, there is nothing upon this earth strong enough to turn my heart from you."

She placed her hand in her father's as she spoke, and he grasped it so tightly that her pale face grew crimson with the pain.

"Are you sure of that, Madge?" he asked, bending his head to look more closely in her earnest face.

"I am quite sure, father."

"Nothing can tear your heart from me?"

"Nothing in this world."

"What if I am not worthy of your love?"

"I cannot stop to think of that, father. Love is not meted out in strict proportion to the merits of those we love. If it were, there would be no difference between love and justice."

James Wentworth laughed sneeringly.

"There is little enough difference as it is, perhaps," he said; "they're both blind. Well, Madge," he added, in a more serious tone, "you're a generous-minded, noble-spirited girl, and I believe you do love me. I fancy that if you never asked the secret of my life, you can guess it pretty closely, eh?"

He looked searchingly at the girl's face. She hung her head, but did not answer him.

"You can guess the secret, can't you, Madge? Don't be afraid to speak, girl."

"I fear I can guess it, father dear," she murmured in a low voice.

"Speak out, then."

“ I am afraid the reason you have never prospered—the reason that so many are against you—is that you once did something wrong, very long ago, when you were young and reckless, and scarcely knew the nature of your own act; and that now, though you are truly penitent and sorry, and have long wished to lead an altered life, the world won't forget or forgive that old wrong. Is it so, father?”

“ It is, Margaret. You've guessed right enough, child, except that you've omitted one fact. The wrong I did was done for the sake of another. I was tempted to do it by another. I made no profit by it myself, and I never hoped to make any. But when detection came, it was upon *me* that the disgrace and ruin fell; while the man for whom I had done wrong—the man who had made me his tool—turned his back upon me, and refused to utter one word in my justification, though he was in no danger himself, and the lightest word from his lips might have saved me. That was a hard case, wasn't it, Madge?”

“Hard!” cried the girl, with her nostrils quivering and her hands clenched; “it was cruel, dastardly, infamous!”

“From that day, Margaret, I was a ruined man. The brand of society was upon me. The world would not let me live honestly, and the love of life was too strong in me to let me face death. I tried to live dishonestly, and I led a wild, rackety, dare-devil kind of a life, amongst men who found they had a skilful tool, and knew how to use me. They did use me to their hearts’ content, and left me in the lurch when danger came. I was arrested for forgery, tried, found guilty, and transported for life. Don’t flinch, girl! don’t turn so white! You must have heard something of this whispered and hinted at often enough before to-day. You may as well know the whole truth. I was transported for life, Madge; and for thirteen years I toiled amongst the wretched, guilty slaves in Norfolk Island—that was the favourite place in those days for such as me—and at the end of that time, my conduct having been approved of by my gaolers, the go-

vernor sent for me, gave me a good-service certificate, and I went into a counting-house and served as a clerk. But I got a kind of fever in my blood, and night and day I only thought of one thing, and that was my chance of escape. I did escape,—never you mind how, that's a long story,—and I got back to England, a free man; a free man, Madge, *I* thought; but the world soon told me another story. I was a felon, a gaol-bird; and I was never more to lift my head amongst honest people. I couldn't bear it, Madge, my girl. Perhaps a better man might have persevered in spite of all till he conquered the world's prejudice. But *I* couldn't. I sank under my trials, and fell lower and lower. And for every disgrace that has ever fallen upon me—for every sorrow I have ever suffered—for every sin I have ever committed—I look to one man as the cause.”

Margaret Wentworth had risen to her feet. She stood before her father now, pale and breathless, with her lips parted, and her bosom heaving.

“Tell me his name, father,” she whispered;
“tell me that man’s name.”

“Why do you want to know his name,
Madge?”

“Never mind why, father. Tell it to me—
tell it!”

She stamped her foot in the vehemence of her
passion.

“Tell me his name, father,” she repeated,
impatiently.

“His name is Henry Dunbar,” James Wentworth answered; “and he is the son of a rich banker. I saw his father’s death in the paper last March. His uncle died ten years ago, and he will inherit the fortunes of both father and uncle. The world has smiled upon him. *He* has never suffered for that one false step in life, which brought such ruin upon me. He will come home from India now, I daresay, and the world will be under his feet. He will be worth a million of money, I should fancy: curse him! If my wishes could be accomplished, every guinea he possesses would

be a separate scorpion to sting and to torture him."

"Henry Dunbar," whispered Margaret to herself—"Henry Dunbar. I will not forget that name."

CHAPTER III.

THE MEETING AT THE RAILWAY STATION.

WHEN the hands of the little clock in Margaret's sitting-room pointed to five minutes before three, James Wentworth rose from his lounging attitude in the easy-chair, and took his hat from a side-table.

"Are you going out, father?" the girl asked.

"Yes, Madge; I'm going up to London. It don't do for me to sit still too long. Bad thoughts come fast enough at any time; but they come fastest when a fellow sits twirling his thumbs. Don't look so frightened, Madge; I'm not going to do any harm. I'm only going to look about me. I may fall in with a bit of luck, perhaps; no matter what, if it puts a few shillings into my pocket."

"I'd rather you stayed at home, father dear," Margaret said, gently.

“I daresay you would, child. But, I tell you, I can’t. I *can’t* sit quiet this afternoon. I’ve been talking of things that always seem to set my brain on fire. No harm shall come of my going away, girl; I promise you that. The worst I shall do is to sit in a tavern parlour, drink a glass of gin-and-water, and read the papers. There’s no crime in that, is there, Madge?”

His daughter smiled as she tried to arrange the shabby velvet collar of his threadbare coat.

“No, father dear,” she said; “and I’m sure I always wish you to enjoy yourself. But you’ll come home soon, won’t you?”

“What do you call ‘soon,’ my lass?”

“Before ten o’clock. My day’s work will be all over long before that, and I’ll try and get something nice for your supper.”

“Very well, then, I’ll be back by ten o’clock to-night. There’s my hand upon it.”

He gave Margaret his hand, kissed her on both cheeks, took his cane from a corner of the room, and then went out.

His daughter watched him from the open

window as he walked up the narrow lane, amongst the groups of children gathered every here and there upon the dusty pathway.

“Heaven have pity upon him, and keep him from sin!” murmured Margaret Wentworth, clasping her hands, and with her eyes still following the retreating figure.

James Wentworth jingled the money in his waistcoat-pocket as he walked towards the railway station. He had very little; a couple of sixpences and a few halfpence. Just about enough to pay for a second-class return ticket, and for his glass of gin-and-water at a London tavern.

He reached the station three minutes before the train was due, and took his ticket.

At half-past three he was in London.

But as he was an idle, purposeless man, without friends to visit or money to spend, he was in no hurry to leave the railway station.

He hated solitude or quiet; and here in this crowded terminus there was life and bustle and variety enough in all conscience; and all to be

seen for nothing: so he strolled backwards and forwards upon the platform, watching the busy porters, the eager passengers rushing to and fro, and meditating as to where he should spend the rest of his afternoon.

By and bye he stood against a wooden pillar in a doorway, looking at the cabs, as, one after another, they tore up to the station, and disgorged their loads.

He had witnessed the arrival of a great many different travellers, when his attention was suddenly arrested by a little old man, wan and wizened and near-sighted, feeble-looking, but active, who alighted from a cab, and gave his small black-leather portmanteau into the hands of a porter.

This man was Sampson Wilnot, the old confidential clerk in the house of Dunbar, Dunbar, and Balderby.

James Wentworth followed [the old man and the porter.

"I wonder if it *is* he," he muttered to himself; "there's a likeness—there's certainly a likeness. But it's so many years ago—so many years

—I don't suppose I should know him. And yet this man recalls him to me somehow. I'll keep my eye upon the old fellow, at any rate."

Sampson Wilmot had arrived at the station about ten minutes before the starting of the train. He asked some questions of the porter, and left his portmanteau in the man's care while he went to get his ticket.

James Wentworth lingered behind, and contrived to look at the portmanteau.

There was a label pasted on the lid, with an address, written in a business-like hand—

"MR. SAMPSON WILMOT,
PASSENGER TO SOUTHAMPTON."

James Wentworth gave a long whistle.

"I thought as much," he muttered; "I thought I couldn't be mistaken!"

He went into the ticket-office, where the clerk was standing amongst the crowd, waiting to take his ticket.

James Wentworth went up close to him and touched him lightly on the shoulder.

Sampson Wilmot turned and looked him full

in the face. He looked, but there was no ray of recognition in that look.

“Do you want me, sir?” he asked, with rather a suspicious glance at the reprobate’s shabby dress.

“Yes, Mr. Wilmot, I want to speak to you. You can come into the waiting-room with me, after you’ve taken your ticket.”

The clerk stared aghast. The tone of this shabby-looking stranger was almost one of command.

“I don’t know you, my good sir,” stammered Sampson; “I never set eyes upon you before; and unless you are a messenger sent after me from the office, you must be under a mistake. You are a stranger to me!”

“I am no stranger, and I am no messenger!” answered the other. “You’ve got your ticket? That’s all right! Now you can come with me?”

He walked into a waiting-room, the half-glass doors of which opened out of the office. The room was empty, for it only wanted five minutes to the

starting of the train, and the passengers had hurried off to take their seats.

James Wentworth took off his hat, and brushed his rumpled gray hair from his forehead.

"Put on your spectacles, Sampson Wilmot," he said, "and look hard at me, and then tell me if I am a stranger to you."

The old clerk obeyed, nervously, fearfully. His tremulous hands could scarcely adjust his spectacles.

He looked at the reprobate's face for some moments and said nothing. But his breath came quicker, and his face grew very pale.

"Ay," said James Wentworth, "look your hardest, and deny me if you can. It will be only wise to deny me, I'm no credit to any one—least of all to a steady respectable old chap like you!"

"Joseph!—Joseph!" gasped the old clerk; "is it you? Is it really my wretched brother? I thought you were dead, Joseph—I thought you were dead and gone!"

"And wished it, I daresay!" the other answered bitterly.

“No, Joseph,—no!” cried Sampson Wilmot; “heaven knows I never wished you ill. Heaven knows I was always sorry for you, and could make excuses for you even when you sank lowest!”

“That’s strange!” Joseph muttered, with a sneer; “that’s very strange! If you were so precious fond of me, how was it that you stopped in the house of Dunbar and Dunbar? If you had had one spark of natural affection for me, you could never have eaten *their* bread!”

Sampson Wilmot shook his head sorrowfully.

“Don’t be too hard upon me, Joseph,” he said, with mild reproachfulness; “if I hadn’t stopped at the banking-house, your mother might have starved!”

The reprobate made no answer to this; but he turned his face away and sighed.

The bell rang for the starting of the train.

“I must go,” Sampson cried. “Give me your address, Joseph, and I will write to you.”

“Oh, yes, I daresay!” answered his brother scornfully; “no, no, *that* won’t do. I’ve found

you, my rich respectable brother, and I'll stick to you. Where are you going?"

"To Southampton."

"What for?"

"To meet Henry Dunbar."

Joseph Wilmot's face grew livid with rage.

The change that came over it was so sudden and so awful in its nature, that the old clerk started back as if he had seen a ghost.

"You are going to meet *him*?" said Joseph, in a hoarse whisper; "he is in England, then?"

"No; but he is expected to arrive almost immediately. Why do you look like that, Joseph?"

"Why do I look like that?" cried the younger man; "have you grown to be such a mere machine, such a speaking automaton, such a living tool of the men you serve, that all human feeling has perished in your breast? Bah! how should such as you understand what I feel? Hark! the bell's ringing—I'll come with you."

The train was on the point of starting, the two men hurried out to the platform.

"No,—no," cried Sampson Wilmot, as his

brother stepped after him into the carriage; “no, —no, Joseph, don’t come with me,—don’t come with me!”

“I will go with you.”

“But you’ve no ticket.”

“I can get one—or you can get me one, for I’ve no money—at the first station we stop at.”

They were seated in a second-class railway carriage by this time. The ticket-collector, running from carriage to carriage, was in too great a hurry to discover that the little bit of pasteboard which Joseph Wilmot exhibited was only a return-ticket to Wandsworth. There was a brief scramble, a banging of doors, and Babel-like confusion of tongues; and then the engine gave its farewell shriek and rushed away.

The old clerk looked very uneasily at his younger brother’s face. The livid pallor had passed away, but the strongly-marked eyebrows met in a dark frown.

“Joseph—Joseph!” said Sampson, “heaven only knows I’m glad to see you, after more than thirty years’ separation, and any help I can give

you out of my slender means I'll give freely—I will, indeed, Joseph, for the memory of our dear mother, if not for love of you; and I do love you, Joseph,—I do love you very dearly still. But I'd rather you didn't take this journey with me—I would, indeed. I can't see that any good can come of it."

"Never you mind what comes of it. I want to talk to you. You're a nice affectionate brother to wish to shuffle me off directly after our first meeting. I want to talk to you, Sampson Wilmot. And I want to see *him*. I know how the world's used *me* for the last five-and-thirty years; I want to see how the same world—such a just and merciful world as it is—has treated my tempter and betrayer, Henry Dunbar!"

Sampson Wilmot trembled like a leaf. His health had been very feeble ever since the second shock of paralysis—that dire and silent foe, whose invisible hand had stricken the old man down as he sat at his desk, without one moment's warning. His health was feeble, and the shock of meeting with this brother—this poor lost disgraced brother

—whom he had for five-and-twenty years believed to be dead, had been almost too much for him. Nor was this all—unutterable terror took possession of him when he thought of a meeting between Joseph Wilmot and Henry Dunbar. The old man could remember his brother's words :

“ Let him consider it a lucky escape if, when we next meet, he gets off scot free !”

Sampson Wilmot had prayed night and day that such a meeting might never take place. For five-and-thirty years it had been delayed. Surely it would not take place now.

The old clerk looked nervously at his brother's face.

“ Joseph,” he murmured, “ I'd rather you didn't go with me to Southampton ; I'd rather you didn't meet Mr. Dunbar. You were very badly treated—cruelly and unjustly treated—nobody knows that better than I. But it's a long time ago, Joseph—it's a very, very long time ago. Bitter feelings die out of a man's breast as the years roll by—don't they, Joseph ? Time heals all old

wounds, and we learn to forgive others as we hope to be forgiven—don't we, Joseph?"

"*You may,*" answered the reprobate fiercely ;
"I don't!"

He said no more, but sat silent, with his arms folded over his breast.

He looked straight before him out of the carriage-window ; but he saw no more of the pleasant landscape,—the fair fields of waving corn, with scarlet poppies and deep-blue corn-flowers, bright glimpses of sunlit water, and distant villages, with gray church-turrets, nestling among trees. He looked out of the carriage-window, and some of earth's pleasantest pictures sped by him ; but he saw no more of that ever-changing prospect than if he had been looking at a blank sheet of paper.

Sampson Wilmot sat opposite to him, restless and uneasy, watching his fierce gloomy countenance.

The clerk took a ticket for his brother at the first station the train stopped at. But still Joseph was silent.

An hour passed by, and he had not yet spoken.

He had no love for his brother. The world had hardened him. The consequences of his own sins, falling very heavily upon his head, had embittered his nature. He looked upon the man whom he had once loved and trusted as the primary cause of his disgrace and misery, and this thought influenced his opinion of all mankind.

He could not believe in the goodness of any man, remembering, as he did, how he had once trusted Henry Dunbar.

The brothers were alone in the carriage.

Sampson watched the gloomy face opposite to him for some time, and then, with a weary sigh, he drew his handkerchief over his face, and sunk back in the corner of the carriage. But he did not sleep. He was agitated and anxious. A dizzy faintness had seized upon him, and there was a strange buzzing in his ears, and unwonted clouds before his dim eyes. He tried to speak once or twice, but it seemed to him as if he was powerless to form the words that were in his mind.

Then his mind began to grow confused. The hoarse snorting of the engine sounded monoto-

nously in his ears: growing louder and louder with every moment; until the noise of it grew hideous and intolerable—a perpetual thunder, deafening and bewildering him.

The train was fast approaching Basingstoke, when Joseph Wilmot was suddenly startled from his moody reverie.

There was an awful cause for that sudden start, that look of horror in the reprobate's face.

CHAPTER IV.

THE STROKE OF DEATH.

THE old clerk had fallen from his seat, and lay in a motionless heap at the bottom of the railway carriage.

The third stroke of paralysis had come upon him; inevitable, no doubt, long ago; but hastened, it may be, by that unlooked-for meeting at the Waterloo terminus.

Joseph Wilmot knelt beside the stricken man. He was a vagabond and an outcast, and scenes of horror were not new to him. He had seen death under many of its worst aspects, and the grim King of Terrors had little terror for him. He was hardened, steeped in guilt, and callous as to the sufferings of others. The love which he bore for his daughter was, perhaps, the last ray of feeling that yet lingered in this man's perverted nature.

But he did all he could, nevertheless, for the

unconscious old man. He loosened his cravat, unfastened his waistcoat, and felt for the beating of his heart.

That heart did beat ; very fitfully, as if the old clerk's weary soul had been making feeble struggles to be released from its frail tabernacle of clay.

"Better, perhaps, if this should prove fatal," Joseph muttered ; "I should go on alone to meet Henry Dunbar."

The train reached Basingstoke ; Joseph put his head out of the open window, and called loudly to a porter.

The man came quickly, in answer to that impatient summons.

"My brother is in a fit," Joseph cried ; "help me to lift him out of the carriage, and then send some one for a doctor."

The unconscious form was lifted out in the arms of the two strong men. They carried it into the waiting-room, and laid it on a sofa.

The bell rang, and the Southampton train rushed onward without the two travellers.

In another moment the whole station was in

commotion. A gentleman had been seized with paralysis, and was dying.

The doctor arrived in less than ten minutes. He shook his head, after examining his patient.

“It’s a bad case,” said he; “very bad; but we must do our best. Is there any body with this old gentleman?”

“Yes, sir,” the porter answered, pointing to Joseph; “this person is with him.”

The country surgeon glanced rather suspiciously at Joseph Wilmot. He looked a vagabond, certainly—every inch a vagabond; a reckless, dare-devil scoundrel, at war with society, and defiant of a world he hated.

“Are you—any—relation to this gentleman?” the doctor asked, hesitatingly.

“Yes, I am his brother.”

“I should recommend his being removed to the nearest hotel. I will send a woman to nurse him. Do you know if this is the first stroke he has ever had?”

“No, I do not.”

The surgeon looked more suspicious than ever, after receiving this answer.

“Strange,” he said, “that you, who say you are his brother, should not be able to give me information upon that point.”

Joseph Wilmot answered with an air of carelessness that was almost contemptuous :

“It *is* strange,” he said ; “but many stranger things have happened in this world before now. My brother and I haven’t met for years until we met to-day.”

The unconscious man was removed from the railway station to an inn near at hand—a humble, countryfied place, but clean and orderly. Here he was taken to a bed-chamber, whose old-fashioned latticed windows looked out upon the dusty road.

The doctor did all that his skill could devise, but he could not restore consciousness to the paralysed brain. The soul was gone already. The body lay, a form of motionless and senseless clay, under the white counterpane ; and Joseph Wilmot, sitting near the foot of the bed, watched it with a gloomy face.

The woman who was to nurse the sick man came by and by, and took her place by the pillow. But there was very little for her to do.

“Is there any hope of his recovering?” Joseph asked eagerly, as the doctor was about to leave the room.

“I fear not—I fear there is no hope.”

“Will it be over soon?”

“Very soon, I think. I do not believe that he can last more than four-and-twenty hours.”

The surgeon waited for a few moments after saying this, expecting some exclamation of surprise or grief from the dying man’s brother: but there was none; and with a hasty “good evening” the medical man quitted the room.

It was growing dusk, and the twilight shadows upon Joseph Wilmot’s face made it, in its sullen gloom, darker even than it had been in the railway carriage.

“I’m glad of it, I’m glad of it,” he muttered; “I shall meet Harry Dunbar alone.”

The bed-chamber in which the sick man lay opened out of a little sitting-room. Sampson’s

carpet-bag and portmanteau had been left in this sitting-room.

Joseph Wilmot searched the pockets in the clothes that had been taken off his brother's senseless form.

There was some loose silver and a bunch of keys in the waistcoat-pocket, and a well-worn leather-covered memorandum-book in the breast-pocket of the old-fashioned coat.

Joseph took these things into the sitting-room, closed the door between the two apartments, and then rang for lights.

The chambermaid who brought the candles asked if he had dined.

"Yes," he said, "I dined five hours ago. Bring me some brandy."

The girl brought a small decanter of spirit and a wine-glass, set them on the table, and left the room. Joseph Wilmot followed her to the door, and turned the key in the lock.

"I don't want any intruders," he muttered; "these country people are always inquisitive."

He seated himself at the table, poured out a

glass of brandy, drank it, and then drew one of the candles towards him.

He had put the money, the keys, and the memorandum-book, in one of his own pockets. He took out the memorandum-book first, and examined it. There were five Bank-of-England notes for five pounds each in one of the pockets, and a letter in the other.

The letter was directed to Henry Dunbar, and sealed with the official seal of the banking-house. The name of Stephen Balderby was written on the left-hand lower corner of the envelope.

“So, so,” whispered Joseph Wilmot, “this is the junior partner’s letter of welcome to his chief. I’ll take care of that.”

He replaced the letter in the pocket of the memorandum-book, and then looked at the pencil entries on the different pages.

The last entry was the only memorandum that had any interest for him.

It consisted of these few words—

“*H. D., expected to arrive at Southampton*

Docks on or about the 19th inst., per steamer Electra, will be met by Miss Laura D. at Portland Place."

"Who's Laura D.?" mused the spy, as he closed the memorandum-book. "His daughter, I suppose. I remember seeing his marriage in the papers, twenty years ago. He married well, of course. Fortune made *'every thing* smooth for him. He married a lady of rank. Curse him!"

Joseph Wilnot sat for some time with his arms folded upon the table before him, brooding, brooding, brooding; with a sinister smile upon his lips, and an ominous light in his eyes.

A dangerous man always—a dangerous man when he was loud, reckless, brutal, violent: but most of all dangerous when he was most quiet.

By and bye he took the bunch of keys from his pocket, knelt down before the portmanteau, and examined its contents.

There was very little to reward his scrutiny—only a suit of clothes, a couple of clean shirts, and the necessities of the clerk's simple toilet. The carpet-bag contained a pair of boots, a hat-brush,

a night-shirt, and a faded old chintz dressing-gown.

Joseph Wilmot rose from his knees after examining these things, and softly opened the door between the two rooms. There had been no change in the sick chamber. The nurse still sat by the head of the bed. She looked round at Joseph, as he opened the door.

“No change, I suppose?” he said.

“No, sir; none.”

“I am going out for a stroll, presently. I shall be in again in an hour’s time.”

He shut the door again, but he did not go out immediately. He knelt down once more by the side of the portmanteau, and tore off the label with his brother’s name upon it. He tore a similar label off the carpet-bag, taking care that no vestige of the clerk’s name was left behind.

When he had done this, and thrust the torn labels into his pocket, he began to walk up and down the room, softly, with his arms folded upon his breast.

“The Electra is expected to arrive on the nine-

teenth," he said, in a low, thoughtful voice, "on or about the nineteenth. She may arrive either before or after. To-morrow will be the seventeenth. If Sampson dies, there will be an inquest, no doubt: a post-mortem examination, perhaps: and I shall be detained till all that is over. I shall be detained two or three days, at least: and in the mean time Henry Dunbar may arrive at Southampton, hurry on to London, and I may miss the one chance of meeting that man face to face. I won't be baulked of this meeting—I won't be baulked. Why should I stop here to watch by an unconscious man's death-bed? No! Fate has thrown Henry Dunbar once more across my pathway: and I won't throw my chance away."

He took up his hat—a battered, shabby-looking white hat, which harmonised well with his vagabond appearance—and went out, after stopping for a minute at the bar to tell the landlord that he would be back in an hour's time.

He went straight to the railway station, and made inquiries as to the trains.

CHAPTER V.

SINKING THE PAST.

THE train from London to Southampton was due in an hour. The clerk who gave Joseph Wilmot this information asked him how his brother was getting on.

“He is much better,” Joseph answered. “I am going on to Southampton to execute some important business he was to have done there. I shall come back early to-morrow morning.”

He walked into the waiting-room, and stopped there, seated in the same attitude the whole time: never stirring, never lifting his head from his breast: always brooding, brooding, brooding: as he had brooded in the railway carriage, as he had brooded in the little parlour of the inn. He took his ticket for Southampton as soon as the office was open, and then stood on the platform, where

there were two or three stragglers, waiting for the train to come up.

It came at last. Joseph Wilmot sprang into a second-class carriage, took his seat in the corner, with his hat slouched over his eyes, which were almost hidden by its dilapidated brim.

It was late when he reached Southampton; but he seemed to be acquainted with the town, and he walked straight to a small public-house by the river side, almost hidden under the shadow of the town wall.

Here he got a bed, and here he ascertained that the *Electra* had not yet arrived.

He ate his supper in his own room, though he was requested to take it in the public apartment. He seemed to shrink from meeting any one, or talking to any one; and still brooded over his own black thoughts: as he had brooded at the railway station, in the parlour of the Basingstoke inn, in the carriage with his brother Sampson.

Whatever his thoughts were, they absorbed him so entirely that he seemed like a man who

walks in his sleep, doing every thing mechanically, and without knowing what he does.

But for all this he was active, for he rose very early the next morning. He had not had an hour's sleep throughout the night, but had lain in every variety of restless attitude, tossing first on this side and then on that: always thinking, thinking, thinking, till the action of his brain became as mechanical as that of any other machine, and went on in spite of himself.

He went downstairs, paid the money for his supper and night's lodging to a sleepy servant-girl, and left the house as the church-clock in an old-fashioned square hard by struck eight.

He walked straight to the High Street, and entered the shop of a tailor and general outfitter. It was a stylish establishment, and there was a languid young man taking down the shutters, who appeared to be the only person on the establishment just at present,

He looked superciliously enough at Joseph Wilmot, eyeing him lazily from head to foot, and yawning as he did so.

"You'd better make yourself scarce," he said; "our principal never gives any thing to tramps."

"Your principal may give or keep what he likes," Joseph answered, carelessly; "I can pay for what I want. Call your master down: or stay, you'll do as well, I daresay. I want a complete rig-out from head to heel. Do you understand?"

"I shall, perhaps, when I see the money for it," the languid youth answered, with a sneer.

"So you've learned the way of the world already, have you, my lad?" said Joseph Wilmot, bitterly. Then, pulling his brother's memorandum-book from his pocket, he opened it, and took out the little packet of bank-notes. "I suppose you can understand these?" he said.

The languid youth lifted his nose, which by its natural conformation betrayed an aspiring character, and looked dubiously at his customer.

"I can understand as they might be flash 'uns," he remarked, significantly.

Mr. Joseph Wilmot growled out an oath, and made a plunge at the young shopman.

“I said as they *might* be flash,” the youth remonstrated, quite meekly; “there’s no call to fly at me. I didn’t mean to give no offence.”

“No,” muttered Mr. Wilmot; “egad! you’d better *not* mean it. Call your master.”

The youth retired to obey: he was quite subdued and submissive by this time.

Joseph Wilmot looked about the shop.

“The cur forgot the till,” he muttered; “I might try my hand at that, if—” He stopped and smiled with a strange, deliberate expression, not quite agreeable to behold—“if I wasn’t going to meet Henry Dunbar.”

There was a full-length looking-glass in one corner of the shop. Joseph Wilmot walked up to it, looked at himself for a few moments in silent contemplation, and then shook his clenched hand at the reflected image.

“You’re a vagabond!” he muttered between his set teeth, “and you look it! You’re an out-cast; and you look it! But who set the mark

upon you? Who's to blame for all the evil you have done? Whose treachery made you what you are? That's the question!"

The owner of the shop appeared, and looked sharply at his customer.

"Now, listen to me!" Joseph Wilmot said, slowly and deliberately. "I've been down upon my luck for some time past, and I've just got a bit of money. I've got it honestly, mind you; and I don't want to be questioned by such a jack-anapes as that shopboy of yours."

The languid youth folded his arms, and endeavoured to look ferocious in his fiery indignation; but he drew a little way behind his master as he did so.

The proprietor of the shop bowed and smiled.

"We shall be happy to wait upon you, sir," he said; "and I have no doubt we shall be able to give you satisfaction. If my shopman has been impertinent —"

"He has," interrupted Joseph; "but I don't want to make any palaver about that. He's like the rest of the world, and he thinks if a man wears

a shabby coat, he must be a scoundrel; that's all. I forgive him."

The languid youth, very much in the background, and quite sheltered by his master, might have been heard murmuring faintly—

"Oh, indeed! Forgive, indeed! Do you really, now? Thank you for nothing!" and other sentences of a derisive character.

"I want a complete rig-out," continued Joseph Wilnot; "a new suit of clothes;—hat, boots, umbrella; a carpet-bag, half-a-dozen shirts, brush and comb, shaving tackle, and all the et-ceteras. Now, as you may be no more inclined to trust me than that young whipper-snapper of yours, for all you're so uncommon civil, I'll tell you what I'll do. I want this beard of mine trimmed and altered. I'll go to a barber's and get that done, and in the mean time you can make your mind easy about the character of these gentlemen."

He handed the shopman three of the Bank-of-England notes. The man looked at them doubtfully.

“If you think they ain’t genuine, send ’em round to one of your neighbours, and get ’em changed,” Joseph Wilmot said; “but be quick about it. I shall be back here in half an hour.”

He walked out of the shop, leaving the man still staring, with the three notes in his hand.

The vagabond, with his hat slouched over his eyes, and his hands in his pockets, strolled away from the High Street down to a barber’s shop near the docks.

Here he had his beard shaved off, his ragged moustache trimmed into the most aristocratic shape, and his long, straggling gray hair cut and arranged according to his own directions.

If he had been the vainest of men, bent on no higher object in life than the embellishment of his person, he could not have been more particular, or more difficult to please.

When the barber had completed his work, Joseph Wilmot washed his face, readjusted the hair upon his ample forehead, and looked at himself in a little shaving-glass that hung against the wall.

So far as the man's head and face went, the transformation was perfect. He was no longer a vagabond. He was a respectable, handsome-looking gentleman, advanced in middle age. Not altogether unaristocratic-looking.

The very expression of his face was altered. The defiant sneer was changed into a haughty smile; the sullen scowl was now a thoughtful frown.

Whether this change was natural to him, and merely brought about by the alteration in his hair and beard, or whether it was an assumption of his own, was only known to the man himself.

He put on his hat, still slouching the brim over his eyes, paid the barber, and went away. He walked straight to the docks, and made inquiries about the steamer *Electra*. She was not expected to arrive until the next day, at the earliest. Having satisfied himself upon this point, Joseph Wilmot went back to the outfitter's, to choose his new clothes.

This business occupied him for a long time

for in this he was as difficult to please as he had been in the matter of his beard and hair. No punctilious old bachelor, the best and brightest hours of whose life had been devoted to the cares of the toilet, could have shown himself more fastidious than this vagabond, who had been out-at-elbows for ten years past, and who had worn a felon's dress for thirteen years at a stretch in Norfolk Island.

But he evinced no bad taste in the selection of a costume. He chose no gaudy colours, or flashily-cut vestments. On the contrary, the garb he assumed was in perfect keeping with the style of his hair and moustache. It was the dress of a middle-aged gentleman; fashionable, but scrupulously simple, quiet alike in colour and in cut.

When his toilet was complete, from his twenty-one shilling hat to the polished boots upon his well-shaped feet, he left the shady little parlour in which he had changed his clothes, and came into the shop, with a glove dangling loosely in one ungloved hand, and a cane in the other.

The tradesman and his shopboy stared aghast.

“If that turn-out had cost you fifty pound, sir, instead of eighteen pound, twelve, and eleven-pence, it would be worth all the money to you; for you look like a dook!” cried the tailor with enthusiasm.

“I’m glad to hear it,” Mr. Wilmot said, carelessly. He stood before the cheval-glass, and twirled his moustache as he spoke, looking at himself thoughtfully, with a smile upon his face.

Then he took his change from the tailor, counted it, and dropped the gold and silver into his waistcoat-pocket.

The man’s manner was as much altered as his person. He had entered the shop at eight o’clock that morning a blackguard as well as a vagabond. He left it now a gentleman; subdued in voice, easy and rather listless in gait, haughty and self-possessed in tone.

“Oh, by the bye,” he said, pausing upon the threshold of the door, “I’ll thank you to bundle all those old things of mine together into a sheet of brown paper: tie them up tightly. I’ll call for them after dark to-night.”

Having said this, very carelessly and indifferently, Mr. Wilmot left the shop: but though he was now as well dressed and as gentlemanly-looking as any man in Southampton, he turned into the first by-street, and hurried away from the town to a lonely walk beside the water.

He walked along the shore until he came to a village near the river, and about a couple of miles from Southampton. There he entered a low-roofed, little public-house, very quiet and unfrequented, ordered some brandy and cold water of a girl who was seated at work behind the bar, and then went into the parlour,—a low-ceilinged, wainscoted room, whose walls were adorned here and there with auctioneers' announcements of coming sales of live and dead stock, farmhouses and farming implements, interspersed with railway time-tables.

Mr. Joseph Wilmot had this room all to himself. He seated himself by the open window, took up a country newspaper, and tried to read.

But that attempt was a most dismal failure. In the first place, there was very little in the

paper to read: and in the second, Joseph Wilmot would have been unable to chain his attention to the page upon which his eyes were fixed, though all the wisdom of the world had been concentrated upon that one sheet of printed paper.

No; he could not read. He could only think. He could only think of this strange chance which had come to him after five-and-thirty weary years. He could only think of his probable meeting with Henry Dunbar.

He entered the village public-house at a little after one, and he stayed there throughout the rest of the day, drinking brandy-and-water—not immoderately, he was very careful and watchful of himself in that matter—eating a snack of bread and cold meat for his dinner, and thinking of Henry Dunbar.

In that he never varied, let him do what he would.

In the railway carriage, at the Basingstoke inn, at the station, through the long sleepless night at the public-house by the water, in the tailor's shop, even when he was most occupied

by the choice of his clothes, he had still thought of Henry Dunbar. From the time of his meeting the old clerk at the Waterloo terminus he had never ceased to think of Henry Dunbar.

He never once thought of his brother: not so much even as to wonder whether the stroke had been fatal,—whether the old man was yet dead. He never thought of his daughter, or the anguish his prolonged absence might cause her to suffer.

He had put away the past as if it had never been, and concentrated all the force of his mind upon the one idea which possessed him like some strong demon.

Sometimes a sudden terror seized him.

What if Henry Dunbar should have died upon the passage home? What if the Electra should bring nothing but a sealed leaden coffin, and a corpse embalmed in spirit?

No, he could not imagine that! Fate, darkly brooding over these two men throughout half a long lifetime, had held them asunder for five-and-thirty years, to fling them mysteriously together now.

It seemed as if the old clerk's philosophy was not so very unsound, after all. Sooner or later,—sooner or later,—the day of retribution comes.

When it grew dusk, Joseph Wilmot left the little inn, and walked back to Southampton. It was quite dark when he entered the High Street, and the tailor's shop was closing.

“I thought you'd forgotten your parcel, sir,” the man said; “I've had it ready for you ever so long. Can I send it any where for you?”

“No, thank you; I'll take it myself.”

With the brown-paper parcel—which was a very bulky one—under his arm, Joseph Wilmot left the tailor's shop, and walked down to an open pier or quay abutting on the water.

On his way along the river shore, between the village public-house and the town of Southampton, he had filled his pockets with stones. He knelt down now by the edge of the pier, and tied all these stones together in an old cotton pocket-handkerchief.

When he had done this, carefully, compactly, and quickly, like a man accustomed to do all

sorts of strange things, he tied the handkerchief full of stones to the whipcord that bound the brown-paper parcel, and dropped both packages into the water.

The spot which he had chosen for this purpose was at the extreme end of the pier, where the water was deepest.

He had done all this cautiously, taking care to make sure every now and then that he was unobserved.

And when the parcel had sunk, he watched the widening circle upon the surface of the water till it died away.

“So much for James Wentworth, and the clothes he wore,” he said to himself, as he walked away.

He slept that night at the village inn where he had spent the day, and the next morning walked into Southampton.

It was a little after nine o'clock when he entered the docks, and the *Electra* was visible to the naked eye, steaming through the blue water under a cloudless summer sky.

CHAPTER VI.

CLEMENT AUSTIN'S DIARY.

“TO-DAY I close a volume of the rough, careless, imperfect record which I have kept of my life. As I run my fingers through the pages of the limp morocco-covered volume, I almost wonder at my wasted labour;—the random notes, jotted down now and then, sometimes with long intervals between their dates, make such a mass of worthless literature. This diary-keeping is a very foolish habit, after all. Why do I keep this record of a most commonplace existence? For my own edification and improvement? Scarcely, since I very rarely read these uninteresting entries; and I very much doubt if posterity will care to know that I went to the office at ten o'clock on Wednesday morning; that I couldn't get a seat in the omnibus, and was compelled to take a Hansom, which cost me two shillings; that I dined tête-à-

tête with my mother, and finished the third volume of Carlyle's French Revolution in the course of the evening. *Is* there any use in such a journal as mine? Will the celebrated New Zealander, that is to be, discover the volumes amidst the ruins of Clapham? and shall I be quoted as a Pepys of the nineteenth century? But then I am by no means as racy as that worldly-minded little government clerk; or perhaps it may be that the time in which I live wants the spice and seasoning of that golden age of rascality in which my Lady Castlemain's white petticoats were to be seen flaunting in the wind by any frivolous-minded loungeur who chose to take notes about those garments.

“After all, it is a silly, old-fogeyish habit, this of diary-keeping; and I think the renowned Pepys himself was only a bachelor spoiled. Just now, however, I have something more than cab-drives, lost omnibuses, and the perusal of a favourite book to jot down, inasmuch as my mother and myself have lately had all our accustomed habits, in a manner, disorganised by the advent of a lady.

“She is a very young lady, being, in point of

fact, still at a remote distance from an epoch to which she appears to look forward as a grand and enviable period of existence. She has not yet entered what she calls her 'teens,' and two years must elapse before she can enter them, as she is only eleven years old. She is the only daughter of my only sister, Marian Lester, and has been newly imported from Sidney, where my sister Marian and her husband have been settled for the last twelve years. Miss Elizabeth Lester became a member of our family upon the first of July, and has since that time continued to make herself quite at home with my mother and myself. She is rather a pretty little girl, with very auburn plaits hanging in loops at the back of her head. (Will the New Zealander and his countrymen care to know the mysteries of juvenile coiffures in the nineteenth century?) She is a very good little girl, and my mother adores her. As for myself, I am only gradually growing resigned to the fact that I am three-and-thirty years of age, and the uncle of a bouncing niece, who plays variations upon '*Non più mesta.*'

“And ‘Non più mesta’ brings me to another strange figure in the narrow circle of my acquaintance; a figure that had no place in the volume which I have just closed, but which, in the six weeks’ interval between my last record and that which I begin to-day, has become almost as familiar as the oldest friends of my youth. ‘Non più mesta,’—I hear my niece strumming the notes I know so well in the parlour below my room, as I write these lines, and the sound of the melody brings before me the image of a sweet pale face and dove-like brown eyes.

“I never fully realised the number and extent of feminine requirements until a hack cab deposited my niece and her deal travelling-cases at our hall-door. Miss Elizabeth Lester seemed to want every thing that it was possible for the human mind to imagine or desire. She had grown during the homeward voyage; her frocks were too short, her boots were too small, her bonnets tumbled off her head and hung forlornly at the back of her neck. She wanted parasols and hair-brushes, frilled and furbelowed mysteries of muslin and

lace, copybooks, penholders, and pomatum, a back-board and a pair of globes, drawing-pencils, dumbbells, geological specimens for the illustration of her studies, and a hundred other items, whose very names are as a strange language to my masculine comprehension ; and, last of all, she wanted a musical governess. The little girl was supposed to be very tolerably advanced in her study of the piano, and my sister was anxious that she should continue that study under the superintendence of a duly-qualified instructress, whose terms should be moderate. My sister Marian underlined this last condition. The buying and making of the new frocks and muslin furbelows seemed almost to absorb my mother's mind, and she was fain to delegate to me the duty of finding a musical governess for Miss Lester.

“ I began my task in the simplest possible way by consulting the daily newspapers, where I found so many advertisements emanating from ladies who declared themselves proficient in the art of music, that I was confused and embarrassed by the wealth of my resources : but I took the ladies singly, and

called upon them in the pleasant summer evenings after office hours, sometimes with my mother, sometimes alone.

“ It may be that the seal of old-bachelorhood is already set upon me, and that I am that odious and hyper-sensitive creature commonly called a ‘ fidget;’ but somehow I could not find a governess whom I really felt inclined to choose for my little Lizzie. Some of the ladies were elderly and stern; others were young and frivolous; some of them were uncertain as to the distribution of the letter *h*. One young lady declared that she was fonder of music than any think in the world. Some were a great deal too enthusiastic, and were prepared to adore my little niece at a moment’s notice. Many, who seemed otherwise eligible, demanded a higher rate of remuneration than we were prepared to give. So, somehow or other, the business languished, and after the researches of a week we found ourselves no nearer a decision than when first I looked at the advertisements in the *Times* supplement.

“ Had our resources been reduced, we should

most likely have been much easier to please; but my mother said, that as there were so many people to be had, we should do well to deliberate before we came to any decision. So it happened that, when I went out for a walk one evening, at the end of the second week in July, Miss Lester was still without a governess. She was still without a governess; but I was tired of catechising the fair advertisers as to their qualifications, and went out on this particular evening for a solitary ramble amongst the quiet Surrey suburbs, in any lonely lanes or scraps of common land where the speculating builder had not yet set his hateful foot. It was a lovely evening; and I, who am so much a Cockney as to believe that a London sunset is one of the grandest spectacles in the universe, set my face towards the yellow light in the west, and walked across Wandsworth Common, where faint wreaths of purple mist were rising from the hollows, and a deserted donkey was breaking the twilight stillness with a plaintive braying. Wandsworth Common was as lonely this evening as a patch of sand in the centre of Africa; and being

something of a day-dreamer, I liked the place because of its stillness and solitude.

“Something of a dreamer: and yet I had so little to dream about. My thoughts were pleasant, as I walked across the common in the sunset; and yet, looking back now, I wonder what I thought of, and what image there was in my mind that could make my fancies pleasant to me. I know what I thought of, as I went home in the dim light of the newly-risen moon, the pale crescent that glimmered high in a cloudless heaven.

“I went into the little town of Wandsworth, the queer old-fashioned High Street, the dear old street, which seems to me like a town in a Dutch picture, where all the tints are of a sombre brown, yet in which there is, nevertheless, so much light and warmth. The lights were beginning to twinkle here and there in the windows; and upon this July evening there seemed to be flowers blooming in every casement. I loitered idly through the street, staring at the shop-windows, in utter absence of mind while I thought—

“What could I have thought of, that evening?

and how was it that I did not think the world blank and empty?

“While I was looking idly in at one of those shop-windows—it was a fancy-shop and stationer’s—a kind of bazaar, in its humble way—my eye was attracted by the word ‘Music;’ and on a little card hung in the window I read that a lady would be happy to give lessons on the piano-forte, at the residences of her pupils, or at her own residence, on very moderate terms. The word ‘very’ was underscored. I thought it had a pitiful look somehow, that underscoring of the adjective, and seemed almost an appeal for employment. The inscription on the card was in a woman’s hand, and a very pretty hand—elegant but not illegible, firm and yet feminine. I was in a very idle frame of mind, ready to be driven by any chance wind; and I thought I might just as well turn my evening walk to some account by calling upon the proprietress of the card. She was not likely to suit my ideas of perfection, any more than the other ladies I had seen; but I should at least be able

to return home with the consciousness of having made another effort to find an instructress for my niece.

“The address on the card was, ‘No. 3 Godolphin Cottages.’ I asked the first person I met to direct me to Godolphin Cottages, and was told to take the second turning on my right. The second turning on my right took me into a kind of lane or by-road, where there were some old-fashioned, semi-detached cottages, sheltered by a row of sycamores, and shut in by wooden palings. I opened the low gate before the third cottage, and went into the garden,—a primly-kept little garden, with a grass-plat and miniature gravel-walks, and with a grotto of shells and moss and craggy blocks of stone in a corner. Under a laburnum-tree there was a green rustic bench; and here I found a young lady sitting reading by the dying light. She started at the sound of my footsteps on the crisp gravel, and rose, blushing like one of the cabbage-roses that grew near her. The blush was all the more becoming to her inasmuch as she was naturally

very pale. I saw this almost immediately, for the bright colour faded out of her face while I was speaking to her.

“‘I have come to inquire for a lady who teaches music,’ I said; ‘I saw a card, just now, in the High Street, and as I am searching for an instructress for my little niece, I took the opportunity of calling. But I fear I have chosen an inconvenient time for my visit.’

“I scarcely know why I made this apology, since I had omitted to apologise to the other ladies, on whom I had ventured to intrude at abnormal hours. I fear that I was weak enough to feel bewildered by the pensive loveliness of the face at which I looked, and that my confidence ebbed away under the influence of those grave hazel eyes.

“The face is so beautiful,—as beautiful now that I have learned the trick of every feature, though even now I cannot learn all the varying changes of expression which make it ever new to me, as it was that evening when it beamed on me for the first time. Shall I describe her,—the

woman whom I have only known four weeks, and who seems to fill all the universe when I think of her?—and when do I not think of her? Shall I describe her for the New Zealander, when the best description must fall so far below the bright reality, and when the very act of reducing her beauty into hard commonplace words seems in some manner a sacrilege against the sanctity of that beauty? Yes, I will describe her; not for the sake of the New Zealander, who may have new and extraordinary ideas as to female loveliness, and may require a blue nose or pea-green tresses in the lady he elects as the only type of beautiful womanhood. I will describe her because it is sweet to me to dwell upon her image, and to translate that dear image, no matter how poorly, into words. Were I a painter, I should be like Claude Melnotte, and paint no face but hers. Were I a poet, I should cover reams of paper with wild rhapsodies about her beauty. Being only a cashier in a bank, I can do nothing but enshrine her in the commonplace pages of my diary.

“I have said that she is pale. Hers is that ivory pallor which sometimes accompanies hazel eyes and hazel-brown hair. Her eyes are of that rare hazel, that soft golden brown, so rarely seen, so beautiful wherever they are seen. These eyes are unvarying in their colour; it is only the expression of them that varies with every emotion, but in repose they have a mournful earnestness in their look, a pensive gravity that seems to tell of a life in which there has been much shadow. The hair, parted above the most beautiful brow I ever looked upon, is of exactly the same colour as the eyes, and has a natural ripple in it. For the rest of the features I must refer my New Zealander to the pictures of the old Italian masters—of which I trust he may retain a handsome collection;—for only on the canvasses of Signori Raffaello Sanzio d’Urbino, Titian, and the pupils who emulated them, will he find that exquisite harmony, that purity of form and tender softness of outline, which I beheld that summer evening in the features of Margaret Wentworth.

“Margaret Wentworth,—that is her name. She told it me presently, when I had explained to her, in some awkward vague manner, who I was, and how it was I wanted to engage her services. Throughout that interview, I think I must have been intoxicated by her presence, as by some subtle and mysterious influence, stronger than the fumes of opium, or the juice of lotus flowers. I only know that after ten minutes’ conversation, during which she was perfectly self-possessed, I opened the little garden-gate again, very much embarrassed by the latch on one hand, and my hat on the other; and went back out of that little Paradise of twenty-feet square into the dusty lane.

“I went home in triumph to my mother, and told her that I had succeeded at last in engaging a lady who was in every way suitable, and that she was coming the following morning, at eleven o’clock, to give her first lesson. But I was somewhat embarrassed when my mother asked if I had heard the lady play; if I had inquired her terms; if I had asked for re-

ferences as to respectability, capability, and so forth.

“I was fain to confess, with much confusion, that I had not done any one of these things. And then my mother asked me, why, in that case, did I consider the lady suitable;—which question increased my embarrassment by ten-fold. I could not say that I had engaged her because her eyes were hazel, and her hair of the same colour; nor could I declare that I had judged of her proficiency as a teacher of the piano by the exquisite line of her penciled eyebrows. So, in this dilemma, I had recourse to a piece of jesuitry, of which I was not a little proud. I told my dear mother that Miss Wentworth's head was, from a phrenological point of view, magnificent, and that the organs of time and tune were developed to an unusual degree.

“I was almost ashamed of myself when my mother rewarded this falsehood by a kiss, declaring that I was a dear clever boy, and *such* a judge of character, and that she would rather confide in a stranger, upon the strength of my

instinct, than upon any inferior person's experience.

“After this, I could only trust to the chance of Miss Wentworth's proficiency; and when I went home from the City upon the following afternoon, my mind was far less occupied with the business events of the day than with abstruse speculations as to the probabilities with regard to that young lady's skill upon the piano-forte. It was with an air of supreme carelessness that I asked my mother whether she had been pleased with Miss Wentworth.

“‘Pleased with her!’ cried the good soul; ‘why, she plays magnificently, Clement! Such a touch, such brilliancy! In my young days it was only concert-players who played like that; but nowadays girls of eighteen and twenty sit down, and dash away at the keys like a professor. I think you'll be charmed with her, Clem’—(I'm afraid I blushed as my mother said this; had I not been charmed with her already?)—‘when you hear her play; for she has expression as well as brilliancy. She is passionately

fond of music, I know; not because she went into any ridiculous sentimental raptures about it, as some girls do, but because her eyes lighted up when she told me what a happiness her piano had been to her ever since she was a child. She gave a little sigh after saying that; and I fancied, poor girl, that she had perhaps known very little other happiness.'

" 'And her terms, mother?' I said.

" 'Oh, you dear commercial Clem, always thinking of terms!' cried my mother.

" 'Heaven bless her innocent heart! I had asked that sordid question only to hide the unreasoning gladness of my heart. What was it to me that this hazel-eyed girl was engaged to teach my little niece 'Non più mesta'? what was it to me that my breast should be all of a sudden filled with a tumult of glad emotions, and thus shrink from any encounter with my mother's honest eyes?

" 'Well, Clem, the terms are almost ridiculously moderate,' my mother said, presently. 'There's only one thing that's at all inconvenient,

that is to say, not to me, but I'm afraid *you'll* think it an objection.'

"I eagerly asked the nature of this objection. Was there some cold chill of disappointment in store for me, after all?

" 'Well, you see, Clem,' said my mother, with some little hesitation, 'Miss Wentworth is engaged almost all through the day, as her pupils live at long distances from one another, and she has to waste a good deal of time in going backwards and forwards; so the only time she can possibly give Lizzie is either very early in the morning or rather late in the evening. Now *I* should prefer the evening, as I should like to hear the dear child's lessons; but the question is, would *you* object to the noise of the piano while you are at home?'

"Would I object? Would I object to the music of the spheres? In spite of the grand capabilities for falsehood and hypocrisy which had been developed in my nature since the previous evening, it was as much as I could do to answer my mother's question deliberately, to the effect that

I didn't think I should mind the music-lessons *much*.

“ ‘ You'll be out generally, you know, Clem,’ my mother said.

“ ‘ Yes,’ I replied, ‘ of course, if I found the music in any way a nuisance.’

“ Coming home from the City the next day, I felt like a schoolboy who turns his back upon all the hardships of his life, on some sunny summer holiday. The rattling Hansom seemed a fairy car, that was bearing me in triumph through a region of brightness and splendour. The sunlit suburban roads were enchanted glades; and I think I should have been scarcely surprised to see Aladdin's jewelled fruit hanging on the trees in the villa gardens, or the gigantic wings of Sindbad's roc overshadowing the hills of Sydenham. A wonderful transformation had changed the earth to fairy-land, and it was in vain that I fought against the subtle influence in the air around me.

“ Oh, was I in love, was I really in love at last, with a young lady whose face I had only looked

upon eight-and-forty hours before? Was I, who had flirted with the Miss Balderbys; and half lost my heart to Lucy Sedwicke the surgeon's sister; and corresponded for nearly a year with Clara Carpenter, with the sanction of both our houses, and every thing *en règle*, only to be jilted ignominiously for the sake of an evangelical curate?—was I, who had railed at the foolish passion—(I have one of Miss Carpenter's long tresses in the desk on which I am writing, sealed in a sheet of letter-paper, with Swift's savage inscription, 'Only a woman's hair,' on the cover)—was I caught at last by a pair of hazel eyes and a Raffaellesque profile? Were the wings that had fluttered in so many flames burnt and maimed by the first breath of this new fire? I was ashamed of my silly fancy in one moment, and proud of my love in the next. I was ten years younger all of a sudden, and my heart was all a-glow with chivalrous devotion for this beautiful stranger. I reasoned with myself, and ridiculed my madness, and yet yielded like the veriest craven to the sweet intoxication. I gave the driver of the Hansom five shillings. Had

I not a right to pay him a trifle extra for driving me through fairy-land?

“What had we for dinner that day? I have a vague idea that I ate cherry tart and roast veal, fried soles, boiled custard, and anchovy sauce, all mixed together. I know that the meal seemed to endure for the abnormal period of half-a-dozen hours or so; and yet it was only seven o'clock when we adjourned to the drawing-room, and Miss Wentworth was not due until half-past seven. My niece was all in a flutter of expectation, and ran out of the drawing-room window every now and then to see if the new governess was coming. She need not have had that trouble, poor child, had I been inclined to give her information; since, from the chair in which I had seated myself to read the evening papers, I could see the road along which Miss Wentworth must come. My eyes wandered very often from the page before me, and fixed themselves upon this dusty suburban road; and presently I saw a parasol, rather a shabby one, and then a slender figure coming quickly towards our gate, and then the face, which I am weak

enough to think the most beautiful face in Christendom.

“ Since then Miss Wentworth has come three times a week; and somehow or other I have never found myself in any way bored by ‘ Non più mesta,’ or even the major and minor scales, which, as interpreted by a juvenile performer, are not especially enthralling to the ear of the ordinary listener. I read my books or papers, or stroll upon the lawn, while the lesson is going on, and every now and then I hear Margaret’s—I really must write of her as Margaret; it is such a nuisance to write Miss Wentworth—pretty voice explaining the importance of a steady position of the wrist, or the dexterous turning over or under of a thumb, or something equally interesting. And then, when the lesson is concluded, my mother rouses herself from her after-dinner nap, and asks Margaret to take a cup of tea, and even insists on her accepting that feminine hospitality. And then we sit talking in the tender summer dusk, or in the subdued light of a shaded lamp on the piano. We talk of books; and it is wonderful to me to find how

Margaret's tastes and opinions coincide with mine. Miss Carpenter was stupid about books, and used to call Carlyle nonsensical; and never really enjoyed Dickens half as much as she pretended. I have lent Margaret some of my books; and a little shower of withered rose-leaves dropped from the pages of Wilhelm Meister, after she had returned me the volume. I have put them in an envelope, and sealed it. I may as well burn Miss Carpenter's hair, by the way.

“Though it is only a month since the evening on which I saw the card in the window at Wandsworth, Margaret and I seem to be old friends. After a year Miss Carpenter and I were as far as ever—further than ever, perhaps—from understanding each other; but with Margaret I need no words to tell me that I am understood. A look, a smile, a movement of the graceful head, is a more eloquent answer than the most elaborate of Miss Carpenter's rhapsodies. She was one of those girls whom her friends call ‘gushing;’ and she called Byron a ‘love,’ and Shelley an ‘angel:’ but

if you tried her with a stanza that hasn't been done to death in 'Gems of Verse,' or 'Strings of Poetic Pearls,' or 'Drawing-room Table Lyrics,' she couldn't tell whether you were quoting Byron or Ben Jonson. But with Margaret—Margaret,—sweet name! If it were not that I live in perpetual terror of the day when the dilettante New Zealander will edit this manuscript, I think I should write that lovely name over and over again for a page or so. If the New Zealander should exercise his editorial discretion, and delete my raptures, it wouldn't matter; but I might furnish him with the text for an elaborate disquisition on the manners and customs of English lovers. Let me be reasonable about my dear love, if I can. My dear love—do I dare to call her that already, when, for any thing I know to the contrary, there may be another evangelical curate in the background?

“We seem to be old friends; and yet I know so little of her. She shuns all allusion to her home or her past history. Now and then she has spoken of her father; always tenderly, but always with a sigh; and I fancy that a deepening sha-

dow steals over her face when she mentions that name.

“ Friendly as we are, I can never induce her to let me see her home, though my mother has suggested that I should do so. She is accustomed to go about by herself, she says, after dark as well as in the daytime. She seems as fearless as a modern Una ; and that would indeed be a savage beast which could molest such a pure and lovely creature.”

CHAPTER VII.

AFTER FIVE-AND-THIRTY YEARS.

JOSEPH WILMOT waited patiently enough, in all outward seeming, for the arrival of the steamer. Every body was respectful to him now, paying deference to his altered guise, and he went where he liked without question or hindrance.

There were several people waiting for passengers who were expected to arrive by the *Electra*, and the coming of the steamer was hailed by a feeble cheer from the bystanders grouped about the landing-place.

The passengers began to come on shore at about eleven o'clock. There were a good many children and English nursemaids; three or four military-looking men, dressed in loose garments of gray and nankeen colour; several ladies, all more or less sunburnt; a couple of ayahs; three men-servants; and an aristocratic-looking man of about fifty-five,

dressed, unlike the rest of the travellers, in fine broadcloth, with a black-satin cravat, a gold pin, a carefully-brushed hat, and varnished boots.

His clothes, in fact, were very much of the same fashion as those which Joseph Wilmot had chosen for himself.

This man was Henry Dunbar; tall and broad-chested, with gray hair and moustache, and with a haughty smile upon his handsome face.

Joseph Wilmot stood among the little crowd, motionless as a statue, watching his old betrayer.

“Not much changed,” he murmured; “very little changed! Proud, and selfish, and cruel then—proud, and selfish, and cruel now. He has grown older, and stouter, and grayer; but he is the same man he was five-and-thirty years ago. I can see it all in his face.”

He advanced as Henry Dunbar landed, and approached the Anglo-Indian.

“Mr. Dunbar, I believe?” he said, removing his hat.

“Yes, I am Mr. Dunbar.”

“I have been sent from the office in St. Gun-

dolph Lane, sir," returned Joseph; "I have a letter for you from Mr. Balderby. I came to meet you, and to be of service to you."

Henry Dunbar looked at him doubtfully.

"You are not one of the clerks in St. Gundolph Lane?" he said.

"No, Mr. Dunbar."

"I thought as much; you don't look like a clerk; but who are you, then?"

"I will tell you presently, sir. I am a substitute for another person, who was taken ill upon the road. But there is no time to speak of that now. I came to be of use to you. Shall I see after your luggage?"

"Yes, I shall be glad if you will do so."

"You have a servant with you, Mr. Dunbar?"

"No, my valet was taken ill at Malta, and I left him behind."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Joseph Wilmot; "that was a misfortune."

A sudden flash of light sparkled in his eyes as he spoke.

"Yes, it was devilish provoking. You'll find

the luggage packed, and directed to Portland Place; be so good as to see that it is sent off immediately by the speediest route. There is a port-manteau in my cabin, and my travelling-desk. I require those with me. All the rest can go on."

"I will see to it, sir."

"Thank you; you are very good. At what hotel are you staying?"

"I have not been to any hotel yet. I only arrived this morning. The *Electra* was not expected until to-morrow."

"I will go on to the *Dolphin*, then," returned Mr. Dunbar; "and I shall be glad if you will follow me directly you have attended to the luggage. I want to get to London to-night, if possible."

Henry Dunbar walked away, holding his head high in the air, and swinging his cane as he went. He was one of those men who most confidently believe in their own merits. The sin he had committed in his youth sat very lightly upon his conscience. If he thought about that old story at all, it was only to remember that he had been very badly used by his father and his Uncle Hugh.

And the poor wretch who had helped him—the clever, bright-faced, high-spirited lad who had acted as his tool and accomplice—was as completely forgotten as if he had never existed.

Mr. Dunbar was ushered into a great sunny sitting-room at the Dolphin; a vast desert of Brussels carpet, with little islands of chairs and tables scattered here and there. He ordered a bottle of soda-water, sunk into an easy-chair, and took up the *Times* newspaper.

But presently he threw it down impatiently, and took his watch from his waistcoat-pocket.

Attached to the watch there was a locket of chased yellow gold. Henry Dunbar opened this locket, which contained the miniature of a beautiful girl, with fair rippling hair as bright as burnished gold, and limpid blue eyes.

“My poor little Laura!” he murmured; “I wonder whether she will be glad to see me. She was a mere baby when she left India. It isn’t likely she’ll remember me. But I hope she may be glad of my coming back—I hope she may be glad.”

He put the locket again in its place, and took a letter from his breast-pocket. It was directed in a woman's hand, and the envelope was surrounded by a deep border of black.

"If there's any faith to be put in this, she will be glad to have me home at last," Henry Dunbar said, as he drew the letter out of its envelope.

He read one passage softly to himself.

"If any thing can console me for the loss of my dear grandfather, it is the thought that you will come back at last, and that I shall see you once more. You can never know, dearest father, what a bitter sorrow this cruel separation has been to me. It has seemed so hard that we who are so rich should have been parted as we have been, while poor children have their fathers with them. Money seems such a small thing when it cannot bring us the presence of those we love. And I do love you, dear papa, truly and devotedly, though I cannot even remember your face, and have not so much as a picture of you to recall you to my recollection."

The letter was a very long one, and Henry

Dunbar was still reading it when Joseph Wilmot came into the room.

The Anglo-Indian crushed the letter into his pocket, and looked up languidly.

“Have you seen to all that?” he asked.

“Yes, Mr. Dunbar; the luggage has been sent off.”

Joseph Wilmot had not yet removed his hat. He had rather an undecided manner, and walked once or twice up and down the room, stopping now and then, and then walking on again, in an unsettled way; like a man who has some purpose in his mind, yet is oppressed by a feverish irresolution as to the performance of that purpose.

But Mr. Dunbar took no notice of this. He sat with the newspaper in his hand, and did not deign to lift his eyes to his companion, after that first brief question. He was accustomed to be waited upon, and to look upon the people who served him as beings of an inferior class: and he had no idea of troubling himself about this gentlemanly-looking clerk from St. Gundolph Lane.

Joseph Wilmot stopped suddenly upon the

other side of the table, near which Mr. Dunbar sat, and, laying his hand upon it, said quietly—

“You asked me just now who I was, Mr. Dunbar.”

The banker looked up at him with haughty indifference.

“Did I? Oh, yes, I remember; and you told me you came from the office. That is quite enough.”

“Pardon me, Mr. Dunbar, it is not quite enough. You are mistaken: I did not say I came from the office in St. Gundolph Lane. I told you, on the contrary, that I came here as a substitute for another person, who was ordered to meet you.”

“Indeed! That is pretty much the same thing. You seem a very agreeable fellow, and will, no doubt, be quite as useful as the original person could have been. It was very civil of Mr. Balderby to send some one to meet me—very civil indeed.”

The Anglo-Indian's head sank back upon the morocco cushion of the easy-chair, and he looked

languidly at his companion, with half-closed eyes.

Joseph Wilmot removed his hat.

“ I don’t think you’ve looked at me very closely, have you, Mr. Dunbar?” he said.

“ Have I looked at you closely !” exclaimed the banker. “ My good fellow, what do you mean ?”

“ Look me full in the face, Mr. Dunbar, and tell me if you see any thing there that reminds you of the past.”

Henry Dunbar started.

He opened his eyes widely enough this time, and started at the handsome face before him. It was as handsome as his own, and almost as aristocratic-looking. For nature has odd caprices now and then, and had made very little distinction between the banker, who was worth half a million, and the runaway convict, who was not worth sixpence.

“ Have I met you before?” he said. “ In India ?”

“ No, Mr. Dunbar, not in India. You know

that as well as I do. Carry your mind farther back. Carry it back to the time before you went to India."

"What then?"

"Do you remember losing a heap of money on the Derby, and being in so desperate a frame of mind that you took the holster-pistols down from their place above the chimney-piece in your barrack sitting-room, and threatened to blow your brains out? Do you remember, in your despair, appealing to a lad who served you, and who loved you, better perhaps than a brother would have loved you, though he *was* your inferior by birth and station, and the son of a poor, hard-working woman? Do you remember entreating this boy—who had a knack of counterfeiting other people's signatures, but who had never used his talent for any guilty purpose until that hour, so help me Heaven!—to aid you in a scheme by which your creditors were to be kept quiet till you could get the money to pay them? Do you remember all this? Yes, I see you do—the answer is written on your face; and you remember me—Joseph Wilmot."

He struck his hand upon his breast, and stood with his eyes fixed upon the other's face. They had a strange expression in them, those eyes—a sort of hungry, eager look, as if the very sight of his old foe was a kind of food that went some way towards satisfying this man's vengeful fury.

“I do remember you,” Henry Dunbar said slowly. He had turned deadly pale, and cold drops of sweat had broken out upon his forehead: he wiped them away with his perfumed cambric handkerchief as he spoke.

“You do remember me?” the other man repeated, with no change in the expression of his face.

“I do; and, believe me, I am heartily sorry for the past. I daresay you fancy I acted cruelly towards you on that wretched day in St. Gundolph Lane; but I really could scarcely act otherwise. I was so harassed and tormented by my own position, that I could not be expected to get myself deeper into the mire by interceding for you. However, now that I am my own master,

I can make it up to you. Rely upon it, my good fellow, I'll atone for the past."

"Atone for the past!" cried Joseph Wilmot. "Can you make me an honest man, or a respectable member of society? Can you remove the stamp of the felon from me, and win for me the position I *might* have held in this hard world but for you? Can you give me back the five-and-thirty blighted years of my life, and take the blight from them? Can you heal my mother's broken heart,—broken long ago by my disgrace? Can you give me back the dead? Or can you give me pleasant memories, or peaceful thoughts, or the hope of God's forgiveness? No, no; you can give me none of these."

Mr. Henry Dunbar was essentially a man of the world. He was not a passionate man. He was a gentlemanly creature, very seldom demonstrative in his manner, and he wished to take life pleasantly.

He was utterly selfish and heartless. But as he was very rich, people readily overlooked such small failings as selfishness and want of heart,

and were loud in praise of the graces of his manner and the elegance of his person.

“My dear Wilmot,” he said, in no wise startled by the vehemence of his companion, “all that is so much sentimental talk. Of course I can’t give you back the past. The past was your own, and you might have fashioned it as you pleased. If you went wrong, you have no right to throw the blame of your wrong-doing upon me. Pray don’t talk about broken hearts, and blighted lives, and all that sort of thing. I’m a man of the world, and I can appreciate the exact value of that kind of twaddle. I am sorry for the scrape I got you into, and am ready to do any thing reasonable to atone for that old business. I can’t give you back the past; but I can give you that for which most men are ready to barter past, present, and future,—I can give you money.”

“How much?” asked Joseph Wilmot, with a half-suppressed fierceness in his manner.

“Humph!” murmured the Anglo-Indian, pulling his gray moustaches with a reflective air.

“Let me see; what would satisfy you, now, my good fellow?”

“I leave that for you to decide.”

“Very well, then. I suppose you’d be quite contented if I were to buy you a small annuity, that would keep you straight with the world for the rest of your life. Say, fifty pounds a year.”

“Fifty pounds a year,” Joseph Wilmot repeated. He had quite conquered that fierceness of expression by this time, and spoke very quietly. “Fifty pounds a year,—a pound a week.”

“Yes.”

“I’ll accept your offer, Mr. Dunbar. A pound a week. That will enable me to live,—to live as labouring men live, in some hovel or other; and will insure me bread every day. I have a daughter, a very beautiful girl, about the same age as your daughter: and, of course, she’ll share my income with me, and will have as much cause to bless your generosity as I shall have.”

“It’s a bargain, then?” asked the East Indian, languidly.

“Oh, yes, it’s a bargain. You have estates in

Warwickshire and Yorkshire, a house in Portland Place, and half a million of money; but, of course, all those things are necessary to *you*. I shall have—thanks to your generosity, and as an atonement for all the shame and misery, the want, and peril, and disgrace, which I have suffered for five-and-thirty years—a pound a week secured to me for the rest of my life. A thousand thanks, Mr. Dunbar. You are your own self still, I find; the same master I loved when I was a boy; and I accept your generous offer.”

He laughed as he finished speaking, loudly but not heartily—rather strangely, perhaps; but Mr. Dunbar did not trouble himself to notice any such insignificant fact as the merriment of his old valet.

“Now we have done with all these heroics,” he said, “perhaps you’ll be good enough to order luncheon for me.”

CHAPTER VIII.

THE FIRST STAGE ON THE JOURNEY HOME.

JOSEPH WILMOT obeyed his old master, and ordered a very excellent luncheon, which was served in the best style of the Dolphin; and a sojourn at the Dolphin is almost a recompense for the pains and penalties of the voyage home from India. Mr. Dunbar from the sublime height of his own grandeur stooped to be very friendly with his old valet, and insisted upon Joseph's sitting down with him at the well-spread table. But although the Anglo-Indian did ample justice to the luncheon, and washed down a spatchcock and a lobster-salad with several glasses of iced Moselle, the reprobate ate and drank very little, and sat for the best part of the time crumbling his bread in a strange absent manner, and watching his companion's face. He only spoke when his old master addressed him; and then in a constrained, half-mechanical way,

which might have excited the wonder of any one less supremely indifferent than Henry Dunbar to the feelings of his fellow-creatures.

The Anglo-Indian finished his luncheon, left the table, and walked to the window : but Joseph Wilmot still sat with a full glass before him. The sparkling bubbles had vanished from the clear amber wine ; but although Moselle at half-a-guinea a bottle could scarcely have been a very common beverage to the ex-convict, he seemed to have no appreciation of the vintage. He sat with his head bent and his elbow on his knee ; brooding, brooding, brooding.

Henry Dunbar amused himself for about ten minutes looking out at the busy street—the brightest, airiest, lightest, prettiest High Street in all England, perhaps ; and then turned away from the window and looked at his old valet. He had been accustomed, five-and-thirty years ago, to be familiar with the man, and to make a confidant and companion of him, and he fell into the same manner now, naturally ; as if the five-and-thirty years had never been ; as if Joseph Wilmot had never

been wronged by him. He fell into the old way, and treated his companion with that haughty affability which a monarch may be supposed to exhibit towards his prime favourite.

“Drink your wine, Wilmot,” he exclaimed; “don’t sit meditating there, as if you were a great speculator brooding over the stagnation of the money-market. I want bright looks, man, to welcome me back to my native country. I’ve seen dark faces enough out yonder; and I want to see smiling and pleasanter faces here. You look as black as if you had committed a murder, or were plotting one.”

The Outcast smiled.

“I’ve so much reason to look cheerful, haven’t I?” he said, in the same tone he had used when he had declared his acceptance of the banker’s bounty. “I’ve such a pleasant life before me, and such agreeable recollections to look back upon. A man’s memory seems to me like a book of pictures that he must be continually looking at, whether he will or not: and if the pictures are horrible, if he shudders as he looks at them, if the sight of

them is worse than the pain of death to him, he *must* look nevertheless. I read a story the other day—at least my girl was reading it to me; poor child! she tries to soften me with these things sometimes—and the man who wrote the story said it was well for the most miserable of us to pray, ‘Lord, keep my memory green!’ But what if the memory is a record of crime, Mr. Dunbar? Can we pray that *those* memories may be kept green? Wouldn’t it be better to pray that our brains and hearts may wither, leaving us no power to look back upon the past? If I could have forgotten the wrong you did me five-and-thirty years ago, I might have been a different man: but I couldn’t forget it. Every day and every hour I have remembered it. My memory is as fresh to-day as it was four-and-thirty years ago, when my wrongs were only a twelvemonth old.”

Joseph Wilmot had said all this almost as if he yielded to an uncontrollable impulse, and spoke because he must speak, rather than from the desire to upbraid Henry Dunbar. He had not looked at the Anglo-Indian; he had not changed his atti-

tude ; he had spoken with his head still bent, and his eyes fixed upon the ground.

Mr. Dunbar had gone back to the window, and had resumed his contemplation of the street ; but he turned round with a gesture of angry impatience as Joseph Wilmot finished speaking.

“ Now, listen to me, Wilmot,” he said. “ If the firm in St. Gundolph Lane sent you down here to annoy and insult me directly I set foot upon British ground, they have chosen a very nice way of testifying their respect for their chief : and they have made a mistake which they shall repent having made sooner or later. If you came here upon your own account, with a view to terrify me, or to extort money from me, *you* have made a mistake. If you think to make a fool of me by any maudlin sentimentality, you make a still greater mistake. I give you fair warning. If you expect any advantage from me, you must make yourself agreeable to me. I am a rich man, and know how to recompense those who please me : but I will not be bored or tormented by any man alive : least of all by you. If you choose to make your-

self useful, you can stay : if you don't choose to do so, the sooner you leave this room the better for yourself, if you wish to escape the humiliation of being turned out by the waiter."

At the end of this speech Joseph Wilmot looked up for the first time. He was very pale, and there were strange hard lines about his compressed lips, and a new light in his eyes.

"I am a poor weak fool," he said, quietly, "very weak and very foolish, when I think there can be any thing in that old story to touch your heart, Mr. Dunbar. I will not offend you again, believe me. I have not led a very sober life of late years : I've had a touch of delirium tremens, and my nerves are not as strong as they used to be : but I'll not annoy you again. I'm quite ready to make myself useful in any way you may require."

"Get me a time-table, then, and let's see about the trains. I don't want to stay in Southampton all day."

Joseph Wilmot rang, and ordered the time-table ; Henry Dunbar studied it.

"There is no express before ten o'clock at

night," he said; "and I don't care about traveling by a slow train. What am I to do with myself in the interim?"

He was silent for a few moments, turning over the leaves of Bradshaw's Guide, and thinking.

"How far is it from here to Winchester?" he asked, presently.

"Ten miles, or thereabouts, I believe," Joseph answered.

"Ten miles! Very well then, Wilmot, I'll tell you what I'll do. I've a friend in the neighbourhood of Winchester, an old college companion, a man who has a fine estate in Hampshire, and a house near St. Cross. If you'll order a carriage and pair to be got ready immediately, we'll drive over to Winchester. I'll go and see my old friend Michael Marston; we'll dine at the George; and go up to London by the express which leaves Winchester at a quarter-past ten. Go and order the carriage, and lose no time about it, that's a good fellow."

Half an hour after this, the two men left Southampton in an open carriage, with the banker's

portmanteau, dressing-case, and despatch-box, and Joseph Wilmot's carpet-bag. It was three o'clock when the carriage drove away from the entrance of the Dolphin Hotel: it wanted five minutes to four when Mr. Dunbar and his companion entered the handsome hall of the George.

Throughout the drive the banker had been in very excellent spirits, smoking cheroots, and admiring the lovely English landscape, the spreading pastures, the glimpses of woodland, the hills beyond the gray cathedral city, purple in the distance.

He had talked a good deal, making himself very familiar with his humble friend. But he had not talked so much or so loudly as Joseph Wilmot. All gloomy memories seemed to have melted away from this man's mind. His former moody silence had been succeeded by a manner that was almost unnaturally gay. A close observer would have detected that his laugh was a little forced, his loudest merriment wanting in geniality: but Henry Dunbar was not a close observer. People in Calcutta, who courted and

admired the rich banker, had been wont to praise the aristocratic ease of his manner, which was not often disturbed by any vulgar demonstration of his own emotions, and very rarely ruffled by any sympathy with the joys, or pity for the sorrows, of his fellow-creatures.

His companion's ready wit and knowledge of the world—the very worst part of the world, unhappily—amused the languid Anglo-Indian; and by the time the travellers reached Winchester, they were on excellent terms with each other. Joseph Wilmot was thoroughly at home with his patron; and as the two men were dressed in the same fashion, and had pretty much the same nonchalance of manner, it would have been very difficult for a stranger to have discovered which was the servant, and which the master.

One of them ordered dinner for eight o'clock, the best dinner the house could provide. The luggage was taken up to a private room, and the two men walked away from the hotel arm-in-arm.

They walked under the shadow of a low stone

colonnade, and then turned aside by the market-place, and made their way into the precincts of the cathedral. There are quaint old courtyards, and shadowy quadrangles hereabouts; there are pleasant gardens, where the flowers seem to grow brighter in the sanctified shade than other flowers that flaunt in the unhallowed sunshine. There are low, old-fashioned houses, with Tudor windows and ponderous porches, gray gables crowned with yellow stone-moss, high garden-walls, queer nooks and corners, deep window-seats in painted oriels, great oaken beams supporting low dark ceilings, heavy clusters of chimneys half borne down by the weight of the ivy that clings about them: and over all, the shadow of the great cathedral broods, like a sheltering wing, preserving the cool quiet of these cosy sanctuaries.

Beyond this holy shelter fair pastures stretch away to the feet of the grassy hills: and a winding stream of water wanders in and out: now hiding in dim groves of spreading elms: now creeping from the darkness, with a murmuring voice and stealthy gliding motion, to change its

very nature, and become the noisiest brook that ever babbled over sunlit pebbles on its way to the blue sea.

In one of the gray stone quadrangles close under the cathedral wall, the two men, still arm-in-arm, stopped to make an inquiry about Mr. Michael Marston, of the Ferns, St. Cross.

Alas! Ben Bolt, it is a fine thing to sail away to foreign shores and prosper there; but it is not so pleasant to come home and hear that Alice is dead and buried; that of all your old companions there is only one left to greet you; and that even the brook, which rippled through your boyish dreams, as you lay asleep amongst the rushes on its brink, has dried up for ever!

Mr. Michael Marston had been dead more than ten years. His widow, an elderly lady, was still living at the Ferns.

This was the information which the two men obtained from a verger, whom they found prowling about the quadrangle. Very little was said. One of the men asked the necessary questions. But neither of them expressed either regret or surprise.

They walked away silently, still arm-in-arm, towards the shady groves and spreading pastures beyond the cathedral precincts.

The verger, who was elderly and slow, called after them in a feeble voice as they went away :

“ Maybe you’d like to see the cathedral, gentlemen ; it’s well worth seeing.”

But he received no answer. The two men were out of hearing, or did not care to reply to him.

“ We’ll take a stroll towards St. Cross, and get an appetite for dinner,” Mr. Dunbar said, as he and his companion walked along a pathway, under the shadow of a moss-grown wall, across a patch of meadow-land, and away into the holy quiet of a grove.

A serene stillness reigned beneath the shelter of the spreading branches. The winding streamlet rippled along amidst wild-flowers and trembling rushes, the ground beneath the feet of these two idle wanderers was a soft bed of moss and rarely-trodden grass.

It was a lonely place this grove ; for it lay be-

tween the meadows and the high-road. Feeble old pensioners from St. Cross came here sometimes : but not often. Enthusiastic disciples of old Isaac Walton now and then invaded the holy quiet of the place : but not often. The loveliest spots on earth are those where man seldom comes.

This spot was most lovely because of its solitude. Only the gentle waving of the leaves, the long melodious note of a lonely bird, and the low whisper of the streamlet, broke the silence.

The two men went into the grove arm-in-arm. One of them was talking, the other listening, and smoking a cigar as he listened. They went into the long arcade beneath the overarching trees, and the sombre shadows closed about them and hid them from the world.

CHAPTER IX.

HOW HENRY DUNBAR WAITED DINNER.

THE old verger was still pottering about the gray quadrangle, sunning himself in such glimpses of the glorious light as found their way into that shadowy place, when one of the two gentlemen who had spoken to him returned. He was smoking a cigar, and swinging his gold-headed cane lightly as he came along.

“You may as well show me the cathedral,” he said to the verger; “I shouldn’t like to leave Winchester without having seen it; that is to say, without having seen it again. I was here forty years ago, when I was a boy; but I have been in India five-and-thirty years, and have seen nothing but Pagan temples.”

“And very beautiful them Pagan places be, sir, bain’t they?” the old man asked, as he un-

locked a low door, leading into one of the side aisles of the cathedral.

“Oh, yes, very magnificent, of course. But as I was not a soldier, and had no opportunity of handling any of the magnificence, in the way of diamonds and so forth, I didn’t particularly care about them.”

They were in the shadowy aisle by this time, and Mr. Dunbar was looking about him with his hat in his hand.

“You didn’t go on to the Ferns, then, sir?” said the verger.

“No, I sent my servant on to inquire if the old lady is at home. If I find that she is, I shall sleep in Winchester to-night, and drive over to-morrow morning to see her. Her husband was a very old friend of mine. How far is it from here to the Ferns?”

“A matter of two mile, sir.”

Mr. Dunbar looked at his watch.

“Then my man ought to be back in an hour’s time,” he said; “I told him to come on to me here. I left him half-way between here and St. Cross.”

“Is that other gentleman your servant, sir?” asked the verger, with unmitigated surprise.

“Yes, that gentleman, as you call him, is, or rather was, my confidential servant. He is a clever fellow, and I make a companion of him. Now, if you please, we will see the chapels.”

Mr. Dunbar evidently desired to put a stop to the garrulous inclinations of the verger.

He walked through the aisle with a careless easy step, and with his head erect, looking about him as he went along: but presently, while the verger was busy unlocking the door of one of the chapels, Mr. Dunbar suddenly reeled like a drunken man, and then dropped heavily upon an oaken bench near the chapel-door.

The verger turned to look at him, and found him wiping the perspiration from his forehead with his perfumed silk handkerchief.

“Don’t be alarmed,” he said, smiling at the man’s scared face; “my Indian habits have unfitted me for any exertion. The walk in the broiling afternoon sun has knocked me up: or perhaps the wine I drank at Southampton may have had

something to do with it," he added, with a laugh.

The verger ventured to laugh too: and the laughter of the two men echoed harshly through the solemn place.

For more than an hour Mr. Dunbar amused himself by inspecting the cathedral. He was eager to see every thing, and to know the meaning of every thing. He peered into every nook and corner, going from monument to monument with the patient talkative old verger at his heels: asking questions about every thing he saw; trying to decipher half-obliterated inscriptions upon long-forgotten tombs; sounding the praises of William of Wykeham; admiring the splendid shrines, the sanctified relics of the past, with the delight of a scholar and an antiquarian.

The old verger thought that he had never had so pleasant a task as that of exhibiting his beloved cathedral to this delightful gentleman, just returned from India, and ready to admire every thing belonging to his native land.

The verger was still better pleased when Mr.

Dunbar gave him half-a-sovereign, as the reward for his afternoon's trouble.

"Thank you, sir, and kindly, to be sure," the old man cackled gratefully. "It's very seldom as I get gold for my trouble, sir. I've shown this cathedral to a dook, sir; but the dook didn't treat me as liberal as this here, sir."

Mr. Dunbar smiled.

"Perhaps not," he said; "the duke mightn't have been as rich a man as I am, in spite of his dukedom."

"No, to be sure, sir," the old man answered, looking admiringly at the banker, and sighing plaintively. "It's well to be rich, sir,—it is indeed; and when one have twelve grandchildren, and a bed-ridden wife, one finds it hard, sir; one do indeed."

Perhaps the verger had faint hopes of another half-sovereign from this very rich gentleman.

But Mr. Dunbar seated himself upon a bench near the low doorway by which he had entered the cathedral, and looked at his watch.

The verger looked at the watch too; it was a

hundred-guinea chronometer, a masterpiece of Benson's workmanship; and Mr. Dunbar's arms were emblazoned upon the back. There was a locket attached to the massive gold chain—the locket which contained Laura Dunbar's miniature.

“Seven o'clock,” exclaimed the banker; “my servant ought to be here by this time.”

“So he ought, sir,” said the verger, who was ready to agree to any thing Mr. Dunbar might say; “if he had only to go to the Ferns, sir, he might have been back by this time, easy.”

“I'll smoke a cheroot while I wait for him,” the banker said, passing out into the quadrangle; “he's sure to come to this door to look for me—I gave him particular orders to do so.”

Henry Dunbar finished his cheroot, and another, and the cathedral clock chimed the three-quarters after seven: but Joseph Wilmot had not come back from the Ferns. The verger waited upon his patron's pleasure, and lingered in attendance upon him, though he would fain have gone home to his tea, which, in the common course, he would have taken at five o'clock.

“ Really this is too bad,” cried the banker, as the clock chimed the three-quarters; “ Wilmot knows that I dine at eight, and that I expect him to dine with me. I think I have a right to a little more consideration from him. I shall go back to the George. Perhaps you’ll be good enough to wait here, and tell him to follow me.”

Mr. Dunbar went away, still muttering, and the verger gave up all thoughts of his tea, and waited conscientiously. He waited till the cathedral clock struck nine, and the stars were bright in the dark blue heaven above him: but he waited in vain. Joseph Wilmot had not come back from the Ferns.

The banker returned to the George. A small round table was set in a pleasant room on the first floor; a bright array of glass and silver glittered under the light of five wax candles in a silver candelabrum; and the waiter was beginning to be nervous about the fish.

“ You may countermand the dinner,” Mr. Dunbar said, with evident vexation; “ I shall not

dine till Mr. Wilmot, who is my old confidential servant—my friend, I may say—returns.”

“Has he gone far, sir?”

“To the Ferns, about a mile beyond St. Cross. I shall wait dinner for him. Put a couple of candles on that writing-table, and bring me my desk.”

The waiter obeyed; he placed a pair of tall wax candles upon the table; and then brought the desk, or rather despatch-box, which had cost forty pounds, and was provided with every possible convenience for a business man, and every elegant luxury that the most extravagant traveller could desire. It was like every thing else about this man: it bore upon it the stamp of almost limitless wealth.

Mr. Dunbar took a bunch of keys from his pocket, and unlocked his despatch-box. He was some little time doing this, as he had a difficulty in finding the right key. He looked up and smiled at the waiter, who was still hovering about, anxious to be useful.

“I *must* have taken too much Moselle at

luncheon to-day," he said, laughing,—“ or, at least, my enemies might say so, if they were to see me puzzled to find the key of my own desk.”

He had opened the box by this time, and was examining one of the numerous packets of papers, which were arranged in very methodical order, carefully tied together, and neatly endorsed.

“ I am to put off the dinner, then, sir ? ” asked the waiter.

“ Certainly ; I shall wait for my friend, however long he may be. I’m not particularly hungry, for I took a very substantial luncheon at Southampton. I’ll ring the bell if I change my mind.”

The waiter departed with a sigh ; and Henry Dunbar was left alone with the contents of the open despatch-box spread out on the table before him under the light of the tall wax candles.

For nearly two hours he sat in the same attitude, examining the papers one after the other, and re-sorting them.

Mr. Dunbar must have been possessed of the very spirit of order and precision ; for, although

the papers had been neatly arranged before, he re-sorted every one of them; tying up the packets afresh, reading letter after letter, and making pencil memoranda in his pocket-book as he did so.

He betrayed none of the impatience which is natural to a man who is kept waiting by another. He was so completely absorbed by his occupation, that he, perhaps, had forgotten all about the missing man: but at nine o'clock he closed and locked the despatch-box, jumped up from his seat, and rang the bell.

"I am beginning to feel alarmed about my friend," he said; "will you ask the landlord to come to me?"

Mr. Dunbar went to the window and looked out while the waiter was gone upon this errand. The High Street was very quiet, a lamp glimmered here and there, and the pavements were white in the moonlight. The footstep of a passer-by sounded in the quiet street almost as it might have sounded in the solemn cathedral aisle.

The landlord came to wait upon his guest.

“Can I be of any service to you, sir?” he asked, respectfully.

“You can be of very great service to me, if you can find my friend ; I am really getting alarmed about him.”

Mr. Dunbar went on to say how he had parted with the missing man in the grove, on the way to St. Cross, with the understanding that Wilmot was to go on to the Ferns, and rejoin his old master in the cathedral. He explained who Joseph Wilmot was, and in what relation he stood towards him.

“I don’t suppose there is any real cause for anxiety,” the banker said, in conclusion ; “Wilmot owned to me that he had not been leading a sober life of late years. He may have dropped into some roadside public-house, and be sitting boozing amongst a lot of country fellows at this moment. It’s really too bad of him.”

The landlord shook his head.

“It is, indeed, sir ; but I hope you won’t wait dinner any longer, sir?”

“No, no ; you can send up the dinner. I’m

afraid I shall scarcely do justice to your cook's achievements, for I took a very substantial luncheon at Southampton."

The landlord brought in the silver soup-tureen with his own hands, and uncorked a bottle of still hock, which Mr. Dunbar had selected from the wine-list. There was something in the banker's manner that declared him to be a person of no small importance; and the proprietor of the George wished to do him honour.

Mr. Dunbar had spoken the truth as to his appetite for his dinner. He took a few spoonfuls of soup, he ate two or three mouthfuls of fish, and then pushed away his plate.

"It's no use," he said, rising suddenly, and walking to the window; "I am really uneasy about this fellow's absence."

He walked up and down the room two or three times, and then walked back to the open window. The August night was hot and still; the shadows of the queer old gabled roofs were sharply defined upon the moonlit pavement. The quaint cross, the low stone colonnade, the solemn

towers of the cathedral, gave an ancient aspect to the quiet city.

The cathedral clock chimed the half hour after nine while Mr. Dunbar stood at the open window, looking out into the street.

“I shall sleep here to-night,” he said presently, without turning to look at the landlord, who was standing behind him. “I shall not leave Winchester without this fellow Wilmot. It is really too bad of him to treat me in this manner. It is really very much too bad of him, taking into consideration the position in which he stands towards me.”

The banker spoke with the offended tone of a proud and selfish man, who feels that he has been outraged by his inferior. The landlord of the George murmured a few stereotyped phrases, expressive of his sympathy with the wrongs of Henry Dunbar, and his entire reprobation of the missing man's conduct.

“No, I shall not go to London to-night,” Mr. Dunbar said; “though my daughter, my only child, whom I have not seen for sixteen

years, is waiting for me at my town house. I shall not leave Winchester without Joseph Wilmot."

"I'm sure it's very good of you, sir," the landlord murmured; "it's very kind of you to think so much of this—ahem—person."

He had hesitated a little before the last word; for although Mr. Dunbar spoke of Joseph Wilmot as his inferior and dependant, the landlord of the George remembered that the missing man had looked quite as much a gentleman as his companion.

The landlord still lingered in attendance upon Mr. Dunbar. The dishes upon the table were still hidden under the glistening silver covers.

Surely such an unsatisfactory dinner had never before been served at the George Hotel.

"I am getting seriously uncomfortable about this man," Mr. Dunbar exclaimed at last. "Can you send a messenger to the Ferns, to ask if he has been seen there?"

"Certainly, sir. One of the lads in the stable shall get a horse ready, and ride over there di-

rectly. Will you write a note to Mrs. Marston, sir?"

"A note? No. Mrs. Marston is a stranger to me. My old friend Michael Marston did not marry until after I left England. A message will do just as well. The lad has only to ask if any messenger from Mr. Dunbar has called at the Ferns; and if so, at what time he was there, and at what hour he left. That's all I want to know. Which way will the boy go; through the meadows, or by the high road?"

"By the high road, sir; there's only a foot-path across the meadows. The shortest way to the Ferns is the pathway through the grove between here and St. Cross; but you can only walk that way, for there's gates and stiles, and such like."

"Yes, I know; it was there I parted from my servant—from this man Wilmot."

"It's a pretty spot, sir, but very lonely at night; lonely enough in the day, for the matter of that."

"Yes, it seems so. Send your messenger off

at once, there's a good fellow. Joseph Wilmot may be sitting drinking in the servants' hall at the Ferns."

The landlord went away to do his guest's bidding.

Mr. Dunbar flung himself into a low easy-chair, and took up a newspaper. But he did not read a line upon the page before him. He was in that unsettled frame of mind which is common to the least nervous persons when they are kept waiting, kept in suspense by some unaccountable event. The absence of Joseph Wilmot became every moment more unaccountable: and his old master made no attempt to conceal his uneasiness. The newspaper dropped out of his hand: and he sat with his face turned towards the door: listening.

He sat thus for more than an hour, and at the end of that time the landlord came to him.

"Well?" exclaimed Henry Dunbar.

"The lad has come back, sir. No messenger from you or any one else has called at the Ferns this afternoon."

Mr. Dunbar started suddenly to his feet, and stared at the landlord. He paused for a few moments, watching the man's face with a thoughtful countenance. Then he said, slowly and deliberately,—

“ I am afraid that something has happened.”

The landlord fidgetted with his ponderous watch-chain, and shrugged his shoulders with a dubious gesture.

“ Well, it is *strange*, sir, to say the least of it. But you don't think that—”

He looked at Henry Dunbar as if scarcely knowing how to finish his sentence.

“ I don't know what to think,” exclaimed the banker. “ Remember, I am almost as much a stranger in this country as if I had never set foot on British soil before to-day. This man may have played me a trick, and gone off for some purpose of his own, though I don't know what purpose. He could have best served his own interests by staying with me. On the other hand, something may have happened to him. And yet what *can* have happened to him?”

The landlord suggested that the missing man might have fallen down in a fit, or might have loitered somewhere or other until after dark, and then lost his way, and wandered into a mill-stream. There was many a deep bit of water between Winchester Cathedral and the Ferns, the landlord said.

“ Let a search be made at daybreak to-morrow morning !” exclaimed Mr. Dunbar. “ I don’t care what it costs me, but I am determined this business shall be cleared up before I leave Winchester. Let every inch of ground between this and the Ferns be searched at daybreak to-morrow morning ; let—”

He did not finish the sentence, for there was a sudden clamour of voices, and trampling, and hubbub in the hall below. The landlord opened the door, and went out upon the broad landing-place, followed by Mr. Dunbar.

The hall below was crowded by the servants of the place, and by eager strangers who had pressed in from outside ; and the two men standing at the top of the stairs heard a hoarse mur-

mur; which seemed all in one voice, though it was in reality a blending of many voices; and which grew louder and louder, until it swelled into the awful word "Murder!"

Henry Dunbar heard it and understood it, for his handsome face grew of a blueish white, like snow in the moonlight, and he leaned his hand upon the oaken balustrade.

The landlord passed his guest, and ran down the stairs. It was no time for ceremony.

He came back again in less than five minutes, looking almost as pale as Mr. Dunbar.

"I'm afraid your friend—your servant—is found, sir," he said.

"You don't mean that he is—"

"I'm afraid it is so, sir. It seems that two Irish reapers, coming from Farmer Matfield's, five mile beyond St. Cross, stumbled against a man lying in a little streamlet under the trees—"

"Under the trees! Where?"

"In the very place where you parted from this Mr. Wilmot, sir."

"Good God! Well?"

“The man was dead, sir; quite dead. They carried him to the Foresters’ Arms, sir, as that was the nearest place to where they found him; and there’s been a doctor sent for, and a deal of fuss: but the doctor—Mr. Cricklewood, a very respectable gentleman, sir—says that the man had been lying in the water hours and hours, and that the murder had been done hours and hours ago.”

“The murder!” cried Henry Dunbar; “but he may not have been murdered! His death may have been accidental. He wandered into the water, perhaps.”

“Oh, no, sir; it’s not that. He wasn’t drowned; for the water where he was found wasn’t three foot deep. He had been strangled, sir; strangled with a running-noose of rope; strangled from behind, sir, for the slip-knot was pulled tight at the back of his neck. Mr. Cricklewood the surgeon’s in the hall below, if you’d like to see him; and he knows all about it. It seems, from what the two Irishmen say, that the body was dragged into the water by the rope.

There was the track of where it had been dragged along the grass. I'm sure, sir, I'm very sorry such an awful thing should have happened to the—the person who attended you here."

Mr. Dunbar had need of sympathy. His white face was turned towards the landlord's, fixed in a blank stare. He had not seemed to listen to the man's account of the crime that had been committed, and yet he had evidently heard every thing: for he said presently, in slow, thick accents—

"Strangled—and the body dragged down—to the water! Who—who could—have done it?"

"Ah, that's the question, indeed, sir. It must all have been done for the sake of a bit of money, I suppose; for there was an empty pocket-book found by the water's edge. There are always tramps and such-like about the country at this time of year; and some of them will commit almost any crime for the sake of a few pounds. I remember—ah, as long ago as forty years and more—when I was a bit of a boy in pinafores,

there was a gentleman murdered on the Twyford road, and they did say—”

But Mr. Dunbar was in no humour to listen to the landlord's reminiscences. He interrupted the man's story with a long-drawn sigh :

“ Is there any thing I can do? What am I to do?” he said. “ Is there any thing I can do?”

“ Nothing, sir, until to-morrow. The inquest will be held to-morrow, I suppose.”

“ Yes—yes, to be sure. There'll be an inquest.”

“ An inquest! Oh, yes, sir; of course there will,” answered the landlord.

“ Remember that I am a stranger to English habits. I don't know what steps ought to be taken in such a case as this. Should there not be some attempt made to find—the—the murderer?”

“ Yes, sir; I've no doubt the constables are on the look-out already. There'll be every effort made, depend upon it; but I'm really afraid this is a case in which the murderer will escape from justice.”

“ Why so?”

“ Because, you see, sir, the man has had plenty

of time to get off; and unless he's a fool, he must be far away from here by this time, and then what is there to trace him by—that's to say, unless you could identify the money, or watch and chain, or what not, which the murdered man had about him?"

Mr. Dunbar shook his head.

"I don't even know whether he wore a watch and chain," he said; "I only met him this morning. I have no idea what money he may have had about him."

"Would you like to see the doctor, sir—Mr. Cricklewood?"

"Yes—no—you have told me all that there is to tell, I suppose?"

"Yes, sir."

"I shall go to bed. I'm thoroughly upset by all this. Stay. Is it a settled thing that this man who has been found murdered is the person who accompanied me to this house to-day?"

"Oh, yes, sir; there's no doubt about that. One of our people went down to the Foresters' Arms, out of curiosity, as you may say, and he

recognised the murdered man directly as the very gentleman that came into this house with you, sir, at four o'clock to-day."

Mr. Dunbar retired to the apartment that had been prepared for him. It was a spacious and handsome chamber, the best room in the hotel; and one of the waiters attended upon the rich man.

"As you've been accustomed to have your valet about you, you'll find it awkward, sir," the landlord had said; "so I'll send Henry to wait upon you."

This Henry, who was a smart, active young fellow, unpacked Mr. Dunbar's portmanteau, unlocked his dressing-case, and spread the gold-topped crystal bottles and shaving apparatus upon the dressing-table.

Mr. Dunbar sat in an easy-chair before the looking-glass, staring thoughtfully at the reflection of his own face, pale in the light of the tall wax candles.

He got up early the next morning, and before breakfasting he despatched a telegraphic message to the banking-house in St. Gundolph Lane.

It was from Henry Maddison Dunbar to William Balderby, and it consisted of these words :

“Pray come to me directly, at the George, Winchester. A very awful event has happened; and I am in great trouble and perplexity. Bring a lawyer with you. Let my daughter know that I shall not come to London for some days.”

All this time the body of the murdered man lay on a long table in a darkened chamber at the Foresters’ Arms.

The rigid outline of the corpse was plainly visible under the linen sheet that shrouded it; but the door of the dread chamber was locked, and no one was to enter until the coming of the coroner.

Meanwhile the Foresters’ Arms did more business than had been done there in the same space of time within the memory of man. People went in and out, in and out, all through the long morning; little groups clustered together in the bar, discoursing in solemn under-tones; and other groups straggled on the threshold, and loitered on the sunny pavement outside; until it seemed as if

every living creature in Winchester was talking of the murder that had been done in the grove near St. Cross.

Henry Dunbar sat in his own room, waiting for an answer to the telegraphic message.

CHAPTER X.

LAURA DUNBAR.

WHILE these things had been happening between London and Southampton, Laura Dunbar, the banker's daughter, had been anxiously waiting the coming of her father.

She resembled her mother, Lady Louisa Dunbar, the youngest daughter of the Earl of Grantwick, a very beautiful and aristocratic woman. She had met Mr. Dunbar in India, after the death of her first husband, a young captain in a cavalry regiment, who had been killed in an encounter with the Sikhs a year after his marriage, leaving his young widow with an infant daughter, a helpless baby of six weeks old.

The poor, high-born Lady Louisa Macmahon was left most desolate and miserable after the death of her first husband. She was very poor, and she

knew that her relations in England were very little better off than herself. She was almost as helpless as her six weeks' old baby ; she was heart-broken by the loss of the handsome young Irishman, whom she had fondly loved ; and ill and broken down by her sorrows, she lingered in Calcutta, subsisting upon her pension, and too weak to undertake the perils of the voyage home.

It was at this time that poor widowed Lady Louisa met Henry Dunbar, the rich banker. She came in contact with him on account of some money arrangements of her dead husband's, who had always banked with Dunbar and Dunbar ; and Henry, then getting on for forty years of age, had fallen desperately in love with the beautiful young widow.

There is no need for me to dwell upon the history of this courtship. Lady Louisa married the rich man eighteen months after her first husband's death. Little Dorothea Macmahon was sent to England with a native nurse, and placed under the care of her maternal relatives ; and Henry Dunbar's beautiful wife became queen of the best

society in the city of palaces, by the right of her own rank and her husband's wealth.

Henry Dunbar loved her desperately, as even a selfish man can sometimes love for once in his life.

But Lady Louisa never truly returned the millionaire's affection. She was haunted by the memory of her first and purest love ; she was tortured by remorseful thoughts about the fatherless child who had been so ruthlessly banished from her. Henry Dunbar was a jealous man, and he grudged the love which his wife bore to his dead rival's child. It was by his contrivance the girl had been sent from India.

Lady Louisa Dunbar held her place in Calcutta society for two years. But in the very hour when her social position was most brilliant, her beauty in the full splendour of its prime, she died so suddenly, that the fashionables of Calcutta were discussing the promised splendour of a ball, for which Lady Louisa had issued her invitations, when the tidings of her death spread like wildfire through the city—Henry Dunbar was a widower.

He might have married again, had he pleased to do so. The proudest beauty in Calcutta would have been glad to become the wife of the sole heir of that dingy banking-house in St. Gundolph Lane.

There was a good deal of excitement upon this subject in the matrimonial market for two or three years after Lady Louisa's death. A good many young ladies were expressly imported from England by anxious papas and mammas, with a view to the capture of the wealthy widower.

But though Griselda's yellow hair fell down to her waist in glossy, rippling curls, that shone like molten gold; though Amanda's black eyes glittered like the stars in a midnight sky; though the dashing Georgina was more graceful than Diana, the gentle Lavinia more beautiful than Venus,—Mr. Dunbar went among them without pleasure, and left them without regret.

The charms of all these ladies concentrated in the person of one perfect woman would have had no witchery for the banker. His heart was dead. He had given all the truth, all the passion of which

his nature was capable, to the one woman who had possessed the power to charm him.

To seek to win love from him was about as hopeless as it would have been to ask alms of a man whose purse was empty. The bright young English beauties found this out by and by, and devoted themselves to other speculations in the matrimonial market.

Henry Dunbar sent his little girl, his only child, to England. He parted with her, not because of his indifference, but rather by reason of his idolatry. It was the only unselfish act of his life, this parting with his child; and yet even in this there was selfishness.

“It would be sweet to me to keep her here,” he thought; “but, then, if the climate should kill her; if I should lose her, as I lost her mother? I will send her away from me now, that she may be my blessing by and by, when I return to England after my father’s death.”

Henry Dunbar had sworn when he left the office in St. Gundolph Lane, after the discovery of the forgery, that he would never look

upon his father's face again,—and he kept his oath.

This was the father to whose coming Laura Dunbar looked forward with eager anxiety, with a heart overflowing with tender womanly love.

She was a very beautiful girl; so beautiful that her presence was like the sunlight, and made the meanest place splendid. There was a queenliness in her beauty, which she inherited from her mother's high-born race. But though her beauty was queenlike, it was not imperious. There was no conscious pride in her aspect, no cold hauteur in her ever-changing face. She was such a woman as might have sat by the side of an English king to plead for all trembling petitioners kneeling on the steps of the throne. She would have been only in her fitting place beneath the shadow of a regal canopy; for in soul, as well as in aspect, she was worthy to be a queen. She was like some tall white lily, unconsciously beautiful, unconsciously grand; and the meanest natures kindled with a faint glow of poetry when they came in contact with her.

She had been spoiled by an adoring nurse, a devoted governess, masters who had fallen madly in love with their pupil, and servants who were ready to worship their young mistress. Yes, according to the common acceptation of the term, she had been spoiled: she had been allowed to have her own way in every thing; to go hither and thither, free as the butterflies in her carefully-tended garden; to scatter her money right and left; to be imposed upon and cheated by every wandering vagabond who found his way to her gates; to ride, and hunt, and drive—to do as she liked, in short. And I am fain to say that the consequence of all this foolish and reprehensible indulgence had been to make the young heiress of Maudesley Abbey the most fascinating woman in all Warwickshire.

She was a little capricious, just a trifle wayward, I will confess. But then that trifling waywardness gave just the spice that was wanting to this grand young lily. The white lilies are never more beautiful than when they wave capriciously in the summer wind; and if Laura Dunbar was a

little passionate when you tried to thwart her ; and if her great blue eyes at such times had a trick of lighting up with sudden fire in them, like a burst of lurid sunlight through a summer storm-cloud, there were plenty of gentlemen in Warwickshire ready to swear that the sight of those lightning-flashes of womanly anger was well worth the penalty of incurring Miss Dunbar's displeasure.

She was only eighteen, and had not yet "come out." But she had seen a great deal of society, for it had been the delight of her grandfather to have her perpetually with him.

She travelled from Maudesley Abbey to Portland Place in the company of her nurse,—a certain Elizabeth Madden, who had been Lady Louisa's own maid before her marriage with Captain Macmahon, and who was devotedly attached to the motherless girl.

But Mrs. Madden was not Laura Dunbar's only companion upon this occasion. She was accompanied by her half-sister, Dora Macmahon, who of late years had almost lived at the Abbey, much to the delight of Laura. Nor was the little

party without an escort; for Arthur Lovell, the son of the principal solicitor in the town of Shorncliffe, near Maudesley Abbey, attended Miss Dunbar to London.

This young man had been a very great favourite with Percival Dunbar, and had been a constant visitor at the Abbey. Before the old man died, he told Arthur Lovell to act in every thing as Laura's friend and legal adviser; and the young lawyer was very enthusiastic in behalf of his beautiful client. Why should I seek to make a mystery of this gentleman's feelings? He loved her. He loved this girl, who, by reason of her father's wealth, was as far removed from him as if she had been a duchess. He paid a terrible penalty for every happy hour, every delicious day of simple and innocent enjoyment, that he had spent at Maudesley Abbey; for he loved Laura Dunbar, and he feared that his love was hopeless.

It was hopeless in the present, at any rate: for although he was handsome, clever, high-spirited, and honourable, a gentleman in the noblest sense of that noble word, he was no fit husband for the

daughter of Henry Dunbar. He was an only son, and he was heir to a very comfortable little fortune: but he knew that the millionaire would have laughed him to scorn had he dared to make proposals for Laura's hand.

But was his love hopeless in the future? That was the question which he perpetually asked himself.

He was proud and ambitious. He knew that he was clever; he could not help knowing this, though he was entirely without conceit. A government appointment in India had been offered to him through the intervention of a nobleman, a friend of his father's. This appointment would afford the chance of a noble career to a man who knew how to seize the golden opportunity, which mediocrity neglects, but which genius makes the stepping-stone to greatness.

The nobleman who made the offer to Arthur Lovell had written to say that there was no necessity for an immediate decision. If Arthur accepted the appointment, he would not be obliged to leave England until the end of a

twelvemonth, as the vacancy would not occur before that time.

“In the mean while,” Lord Herriston wrote to the solicitor, “your son can think the matter over, my dear Lovell, and make his decision with all due deliberation.”

Arthur Lovell had already made that decision.

“I will go to India,” he said; “for if ever I am to win Laura Dunbar, I must succeed in life. But before I go I will tell her that I love her. If she returns my love, my struggles will be sweet to me, for they will be made for her sake. If she does not——”

He did not finish the sentence even in his own mind. He could not bear to think that it was possible he might hear his death-knell from the lips he worshipped. He had gladly seized upon the opportunity afforded by this visit to the town house.

“I will speak to her before her father returns,” he thought; “she will speak the truth to me now fearlessly, for it is her nature to be fearless and candid as a child. But his coming may change

her. She is fond of him, and will be ruled by him. Heaven grant he may rule her wisely and gently !”

On the 17th of August, Laura and Mrs. Madden arrived in Portland Place.

Arthur Lovell parted with his beautiful client at the railway station, and drove off to the hotel at which he was in the habit of staying. He called upon Miss Dunbar on the 18th; but found that she was out shopping with Mrs. Madden. He called again, on the morning of the 19th; that bright sunny August morning on which the body of the murdered man lay in the darkened chamber at Winchester.

It was only ten o'clock when the young lawyer made his appearance in the pleasant morning-room occupied by Laura Dunbar whenever she stayed in Portland Place. The breakfast equipage was still upon the table in the centre of the room. Mrs. Madden, who was companion, housekeeper, and confidential maid to her charming young mistress, was officiating at the breakfast-table; Dora Macmahon was sitting near her, with an open book by

the side of her breakfast-cup ; and Miss Laura Dunbar was lounging in a low easy-chair, near a broad window that opened into a conservatory filled with exotics, that made the air heavy with their almost overpowering perfume.

She rose as Arthur Lovell came into the room, and she looked more like a lily than ever in her long loose morning-dress of soft semi-diaphanous muslin. Her thick auburn hair was twisted into a diadem that crowned her broad white forehead, and added a couple of inches to her height. She held out her little ringed hand, and the jewels on the white fingers scintillated in the sunlight.

“ I am so glad to see you, Mr. Lovell,” she said. “ Dora and I have been miserable, haven’t we, Dora ? London is as dull as a desert. I went for a drive yesterday, and the lady’s mile is as lonely as the Great Sahara. There are plenty of theatres open, and there was a concert at one of the opera-houses last night ; but that disagreeable Elizabeth wouldn’t allow me to go to any one of those entertainments. Grandpapa would have

taken me. Dear grandpapa went every where with me."

Mrs. Madden shook her head solemnly.

"Your gran'pa would have gone after you to the remotest end of this world, Miss Laura, if you'd so much as held your finger up to beckon of him. Your gran'pa spoiled you, Miss Laura. A pretty thing it would have been if your pa had come all the way from India to find his only daughter gallivanting at a theaytre."

Miss Dunbar looked at her old nurse with an arch smile. She was very lovely when she smiled; she was very lovely when she frowned. She was most beautiful always, Arthur Lovell thought.

"But I shouldn't have been gallivanting, you dear old Madden," she cried, with a joyous silver laugh, that was like the ripple of a cascade under a sunny sky. "I should only have been sitting quietly in a private box, with my stupid, precious, aggravating, darling old nurse to keep watch and ward over me. Besides, how *could* papa be angry with me upon the first day of his coming home?"

Mrs. Madden shook her head again even more solemnly than before.

“ I don’t know about that, Miss Laura. You mustn’t expect to find Mr. Dunbar like your gran’pa.”

A sudden cloud fell upon the girl’s lovely face.

“ Why, Elizabeth,” she said, “ you don’t mean that papa will be unkind to me ?”

“ I don’t know your pa, Miss Laura. I never set eyes upon Mr. Dunbar in my life. But the Indian servant that brought you over, when you was but a bit of a baby, said that your pa was proud and passionate; and that even your poor mar, which he loved her better than any livin’ creature upon this earth, was almost afraid of him.”

The smile had quite vanished from Laura Dunbar’s face by this time, and the blue eyes filled suddenly with tears.

“ Oh, what shall I do if my father is unkind to me ?” she said piteously. “ I have so looked forward to his coming home ! I have counted

the very days; and if he is unkind to me—if he does not love me—”

She covered her face with her hands, and turned away her head.

“Laura,” exclaimed Arthur Lovell, addressing her for the first time by her Christian name, “how could any one help loving you? How—”

He stopped, half ashamed of his passionate enthusiasm. In those few words he had revealed the secret of his heart: but Laura Dunbar was too innocent to understand the meaning of those eager words.

Mrs. Madden understood them perfectly; and she smiled approvingly at the young man.

Arthur Lovell was a great favourite with Laura Dunbar’s nurse. She knew that he adored her young mistress; and she looked upon him as a model of all that is noble and chivalrous.

She began to fidget with the silver tea-canisters; and then looked significantly at Dora Macmahon. But Miss Macmahon did not understand that significant glance. Her dark eyes—and she had very beautiful eyes, with a grave, half-pen-

sive softness in their sombre depths—were fixed upon the two young faces in the sunny window; the girl's face clouded with a look of sorrowful perplexity, the young man's face eloquent with tender meaning. Dora Macmahon's colour went and came as she looked at that earnest countenance, and the fingers which were absently turning the leaves of her book were faintly tremulous.

“Your new bonnet's come home this morning, Miss Dora,” Elizabeth Madden said, rather sharply. “Perhaps you'd like to come upstairs and have a look at it.”

“My new bonnet!” murmured Dora, vaguely.

“La, yes, miss; the new bonnet you bought in Regent Street only yesterday afternoon. I never did see such a forgetful, wool-gathering young lady in all my life as you are this blessed morning, Miss Dora.”

The absent-minded young lady rose suddenly, bewildered by Mrs. Madden's animated desire for an inspection of the bonnet. But she very willingly left the room with Laura's old nurse, who was accustomed to have her mandates obeyed even

by the wayward heiress of Maudesley Abbey; and Laura was left alone with the young lawyer.

Miss Dunbar had seated herself once more in the low easy-chair by the window. She sat with her elbow resting on the cushioned arm of the chair, and her head supported by her hand. Her eyes were fixed, and looked straight before her, with a thoughtful gaze that was strange to her: for her nature was as joyous as that of a bird, whose music fills all the wide heaven with one rejoicing psalm.

Arthur Lovell drew his chair nearer to the thoughtful girl.

“Laura,” he said, “why are you so silent? I never saw you so serious before, except after your grandfather’s death.”

“I am thinking of my father,” she answered, in a low, tremulous voice, that was broken by her tears: “I am thinking that, perhaps, he will not love me.”

“Not love you, Laura! who could help loving you? Oh, if I dared—if I could venture—I *must* speak, Laura Dunbar. My whole life hangs upon

the issue, and I will speak. I am not a poor man, Laura; but you are so divided from the rest of the world by your father's wealth, that I have feared to speak. I have feared to tell you that which you might have discovered for yourself, had you not been as innocent as your own pet doves in the dovecote at Maudesley."

The girl looked at him with wondering eyes, that were still wet with unshed tears.

"I love you, Laura; I love you. The world would call me beneath you in station, now; but I am a man, and I have a man's ambition—a strong man's iron will. Every thing is possible to him who has sworn to conquer; and for your sake, Laura, for your love I should overcome obstacles that to another man might be invincible. I am going to India, Laura: I am going to carve my way to fame and fortune, for fame and fortune are *slaves* that come at the brave man's bidding; they are only *masters* when the coward calls them. Remember, my beloved one, this wealth that now stands between you and me may not always be yours.

Your father is not an old man; he may marry again, and have a son to inherit his wealth. Would to heaven, Laura, that it might be so! But be that as it may, I despair of nothing if I dare hope for your love. Oh, Laura, dearest; one word to tell me that I *may* hope! Remember how happy we have been together; little children playing with flowers and butterflies in the gardens at Maudesley; boy and girl, rambling hand-in-hand beside the wandering Avon; man and woman standing in mournful silence by your grandfather's death-bed. The past is a bond of union betwixt us, Laura. Look back at all those happy days, and give me one word, my darling,—one word to tell me that you love me."

Laura Dunbar looked up at him with a sweet smile, and laid her soft white hand in his.

"I do love you, Arthur," she said, "as dearly as I should have loved my brother, had I ever known a brother's love."

The young man bowed his head in silence. When he looked up, Laura Dunbar saw that he was very pale.

“ You only love me as a brother, Laura ? ”

“ How else should I love you ? ” she asked, innocently.

Arthur Lovell looked at her with a mournful smile ; a tender smile that was exquisitely beautiful, for it was the look of a man who is prepared to resign his own happiness for the sake of her he loves.

“ Enough, Laura,” he said quietly ; “ I have received my sentence. You do not love me, dearest ; you have yet to suffer life’s great fever.”

She clasped her hands, and looked at him beseechingly.

“ You are not angry with me, Arthur ? ” she said.

“ Angry with you, my sweet one ! ”

“ And you will still love me ? ”

“ Yes, Laura, with all a brother’s devotion. And if ever you have need of my services, you shall find what it is to have a faithful friend, who holds his life at small value beside your happiness.”

He said no more, for there was the sound of

carriage-wheels below the window, and then a loud double-knock at the hall-door.

Laura started to her feet, and her bright face grew pale.

“My father has come!” she exclaimed.

But it was not her father. It was Mr. Balderby, who had just come from St. Gundolph Lane, where he had received Henry Dunbar’s telegraphic despatch.

Every vestige of colour faded out of Laura’s face as she recognised the junior partner of the banking-house.

“Something has happened to my father!” she cried.

“No, no, Miss Dunbar!” exclaimed Mr. Balderby, anxious to reassure her. “Your father has arrived in England safely, and is well, as I believe. He is staying at Winchester; and he has telegraphed to me to go to him there immediately.”

“Something has happened, then?”

“Yes, but not to Mr. Dunbar individually; as far as I can make out by the telegraphic mes-

sage. I was to come to you here, Miss Dunbar, to tell you not to expect your papa for some few days; and then I am to go on to Winchester, taking a lawyer with me."

"A lawyer!" exclaimed Laura.

"Yes, I am going to Lincoln's Inn immediately to Messrs. Walford and Walford, our own solicitors."

"Let Mr. Lovell go with you," cried Miss Dunbar; "he always acted as poor grandpapa's solicitor. Let him go with you."

"Yes, Mr. Balderby," exclaimed the young man, "I beg you to allow me to accompany you. I shall be very glad to be of service to Mr. Dunbar."

Mr. Balderby hesitated for a few moments.

"Well, I really don't see why you shouldn't go, if you wish to do so," he said, presently. "Mr. Dunbar says he wants a lawyer; he doesn't name any particular lawyer. We shall save time by your going; for we shall be able to catch the eleven-o'clock express."

He looked at his watch.

“There’s not a moment to lose. Good morning, Miss Dunbar. We’ll take care of your papa, and bring him to you in triumph. Come, Lovell.”

Arthur Lovell shook hands with Laura, murmured a few words in her ear, and hurried away with Mr. Balderby.

She had spoken the death-knell of his dearest hopes. He had seen his sentence in her innocent face; but he loved her still.

There was something in her virginal candour, her bright young loveliness, that touched the noblest chords of his heart. He loved her with a chivalrous devotion, which, after all, is as natural to the breast of a young Englishman in these modern days, miscalled degenerate, as when the spotless knight King Arthur loved and wooed his queen.

CHAPTER XI.

THE INQUEST.

THE coroner's inquest, which had been appointed to take place at noon that day, was postponed until three o'clock in the afternoon, in compliance with the earnest request of Henry Dunbar.

When ever was the earnest request of a millionaire refused?

The coroner, who was a fussy little man, very readily acceded to Mr. Dunbar's entreaties.

"I am a stranger in England," the Anglo-Indian said; "I was never in my life present at an inquest. The murdered man was connected with me. He was last seen in my company. It is vitally necessary that I should have a legal adviser to watch the proceedings on my behalf. Who knows what dark suspicions may arise, affecting my name and honour?"

The banker made this remark in the presence of four or five of the jurymen, the coroner, and Mr. Cricklewood, the surgeon who had been called in to examine the body of the man supposed to have been murdered. Every one of those gentlemen protested loudly and indignantly against the idea of the bare possibility that any suspicion, or the shadow of a suspicion, could attach to such a man as Mr. Dunbar.

They knew nothing of him, of course, except that he was Henry Dunbar, chief of the rich banking-house of Dunbar, Dunbar, and Balderby, and that he was a millionaire.

Was it likely that a millionaire would commit a murder?

When had a millionaire ever been known to commit a murder? Never, of course!

The Anglo-Indian sat in his private sitting-room at the George Hotel, writing, and examining his papers—perpetually writing, perpetually sorting and re-sorting those packets of letters in the despatch-box—while he waited for the coming of Mr. Balderby.

The postponement of the coroner's inquest was a very good thing for the landlord of the Foresters' Arms. People went in and out, and loitered about the premises, and lounged in the bar, drinking and talking all the morning, and the theme of every conversation was the murder that had been done in the grove on the way to St. Cross.

Mr. Balderby and Arthur Lovell arrived at the George a few minutes before two o'clock. They were shown at once into the apartment in which Henry Dunbar sat waiting for them.

Arthur Lovell had been thinking of Laura and Laura's father throughout the journey from London. He had wondered, as he got nearer and nearer to Winchester, what would be his first impression respecting Mr. Dunbar.

That first impression was not a good one—no, it was not a good one. Mr. Dunbar was a handsome man—a very handsome man—tall and aristocratic-looking, with a certain haughty grace in his manner that harmonised well with his good looks. But, in spite of all this, the impression

which he made upon the mind of Arthur Lovell was not an agreeable one.

The young lawyer had heard the story of the forgery vaguely hinted at by those who were familiar with the history of the Dunbar family; and he had heard that the early life of Henry Dunbar had been that of a selfish spendthrift.

Perhaps this may have had some influence upon his feelings in this his first meeting with the father of the woman he loved.

Henry Dunbar told the story of the murder. The two men were inexpressibly shocked by this story.

“But where is Sampson Wilmot?” exclaimed Mr. Balderby. “It was he whom I sent to meet you, knowing that he was the only person in the office who remembered you, or whom you remember.”

“Sampson was taken ill upon the way, according to his brother’s story,” Mr. Dunbar answered. “Joseph left the poor old man somewhere upon the road.”

“He did not say where?”

“No ; and, strange to say, I forgot to ask him the question. The poor fellow amused me by old memories of the past on the road between Southampton and this place, and we therefore talked very little of the present.”

“Sampson must be very ill,” exclaimed Mr. Balderby, “or he would certainly have returned to St. Gundolph Lane to tell me what had taken place.”

Mr. Dunbar smiled.

“If he was too ill to go on to Southampton, he would, of course, be too ill to return to London,” he said, with supreme indifference.

Mr. Balderby, who was a good-hearted man, was distressed at the idea of Sampson Wilmot’s desolation ; an old man, stricken with sudden illness and abandoned to strangers.

Arthur Lovell was silent ; he sat a little way apart from the two others, watching Henry Dunbar.

At three o’clock the inquest commenced. The witnesses summoned were the two Irishmen, Patrick Hennessy and Philip Murtock, who had found

the body in the stream near St. Cross ; Mr. Cricklewood, the surgeon ; the verger, who had seen and spoken to the two men, and who had afterwards shown the cathedral to Mr. Dunbar ; the landlord of the George, and the waiter who had received the travellers and had taken Mr. Dunbar's orders for the dinner ; and Henry Dunbar himself.

There were a great many people in the room, for by this time the tidings of the murder had spread far and wide. There were influential people present, amongst others, Sir Arden Westhorpe, one of the county magistrates resident at Winchester. Arthur Lovell, Mr. Balderby, and the Anglo-Indian sat in a little group apart from the rest.

The jurymen were ranged upon either side of a long mahogany table. The coroner sat at the top.

But before the examination of the witnesses was commenced, the jurymen were conducted into that dismal chamber where the dead man lay upon one of the long tap-room tables. Arthur Lovell went with them ; and Mr. Cricklewood the sur-

geon proceeded to examine the corpse, so as to enable him to give evidence respecting the cause of death.

The face of the dead man was distorted and blackened by the agony of strangulation. The coroner and the jurymen looked at that dead face with wondering, awe-stricken glances. Sometimes a cruel stab, that goes straight home to the heart, will leave the face of the murdered as calm as the face of a sleeping child. But in this case it was not so. The horrible stamp of assassination was branded upon that rigid brow. Horror, surprise, and the dread agony of sudden death were all blended in the expression of the face.

The jurymen talked a little to one another in scarcely audible whispers, asked a few questions of the surgeon, and then walked softly from the darkened room.

The facts of the case were very simple; and speedily elicited. But whatever the truth of that awful story might be, there was nothing that threw any light upon the mystery.

Arthur Lovell, watching the case in the in-

terests of Mr. Dunbar, asked several questions of the witnesses. Henry Dunbar was himself the first person examined. He gave a very simple and intelligible account of all that had taken place from the moment of his landing at Southampton.

“I found the deceased waiting to receive me when I landed,” he said. “He told me that he came as a substitute for another person. I did not know him at first—that is to say, I did not recognise him as the valet who had been in my service prior to my leaving England five-and-thirty years ago. But he made himself known to me afterwards, and he told me that he had met his brother in London on the sixteenth of this month, and had travelled with him part of the way to Southampton. He also told me that, on the way to Southampton, the brother, Sampson Wilmot, a much older man than the deceased, was taken ill, and that the two men then parted company.”

Mr. Dunbar had said all this with perfect self-possession, and with great deliberation. He was so very self-possessed, so very deliberate, that it

seemed almost as if he had been reciting something which he had learned by heart.

Arthur Lovell, watching him very intently, saw this, and wondered at it. It is very usual for a witness, even the most indifferent witness, giving evidence about some trifling matter, to be confused, to falter, and hesitate, and contradict himself, embarrassed by the strangeness of his position. But Henry Dunbar was in nowise discomposed by the awful nature of the event which had happened. He was pale; but his firmly-set lips, his erect carriage, the determined glance of his eyes, bore witness to the strength of his nerves and the power of his intellect.

“The man must be made of iron,” Arthur Lovell thought to himself. “He is either a very great man, or a very wicked one. I almost fear to ask myself which.”

“Where did the deceased Joseph Wilmot say he left his brother Sampson, Mr. Dunbar?” asked the coroner.

“I do not remember.”

The coroner scratched his chin, thoughtfully.

“That is rather awkward,” he said; “the evidence of this man Sampson might throw some light upon this most mysterious event.”

Mr. Dunbar then told the rest of his story.

He spoke of the luncheon at Southampton, the journey from Southampton to Winchester, the afternoon stroll down to the meadows near St. Cross.

“Can you tell us the exact spot at which you parted with the deceased?” asked the coroner.

“No,” Mr. Dunbar answered; “you must bear in mind that I am a stranger in England. I have not been in this neighbourhood since I was a boy. My old schoolfellow, Michael Marston, married and settled at the Ferns during my absence in India. I found at Southampton that I should have a few hours on my hands before I could travel express for London, and I came to this place on purpose to see my old friend. I was very much disappointed to find that he was dead. But I thought that I would call upon his widow, from whom I should no doubt hear the history of my poor friend’s last moments. I went with Joseph Wilmot through the cathedral yard, and down

towards St. Cross. The vergers saw us, and spoke to us as we went by."

The vergers, who was standing amongst the other witnesses, waiting to be examined, here exclaimed—

"Ay, that I did, sir; I remember it well."

"At what time did you leave the George?"

"At a little after four o'clock."

"Where did you go then?"

"I went," answered Mr. Dunbar, boldly, "into the grove with the deceased arm-in-arm. We walked together about a quarter of a mile under the trees, and I had intended to go on to the Ferns, to call upon Michael Marston's widow; but my habits of late years have been sedentary, the heat of the day and the walk together were too much for me. I sent Joseph Wilmot on to the Ferns with a message for Mrs. Marston, asking at what hour she could conveniently receive me to-day; and I returned to the cathedral. Joseph Wilmot was to deliver his message at the Ferns, and rejoin me in the cathedral."

"He was to return to the cathedral?"

“ Yes.”

“ But why should he not have returned to the George Hotel? Why should you wait for him at the cathedral?”

Arthur Lovell listened, with a strange expression upon his face. If Henry Dunbar was pale, Henry Dunbar's legal adviser was still more so. The jurymen stared aghast at the coroner, as if they had been awe-stricken by his impertinence towards the chief partner of the great banking-house of Dunbar, Dunbar, and Balderby. How dared he—a man with an income of five hundred a year at the most—how dared he discredit or question any assertion made by Henry Dunbar?

The Anglo-Indian smiled, a little contemptuously. He stood in a careless attitude, playing with the golden trinkets at his watch-chain, with the hot August sunshine streaming upon his face from a bare unshaded window opposite him. But he did not attempt to escape that almost blinding glare. He stood facing the sunlight; facing the gaze of the coroner and the jurymen; the scrutinising glance of Arthur Lovell. Unabashed and

nonchalant as if he had been standing in a ball-room, the hero of the hour, the admired of all who looked upon him, Mr. Dunbar stood before the coroner and jury, and told the broken history of his old servant's death.

“Yes,” Mr. Lovell thought again, as he watched the rich man's face, “his nerves must be made of iron.”

CHAPTER XII.

ARRESTED.

THE coroner repeated his question :

“ Why did you tell the deceased to join you at the cathedral, Mr. Dunbar ? ”

“ Merely because it suited my humour at the time to do so,” answered the Anglo-Indian, coolly. “ We had been very friendly together, and I had a fancy for going over the cathedral. I thought that Wilmot might return from the Ferns in time to go over some portion of the edifice with me. He was a very intelligent fellow, and I liked his society.”

“ But the journey to the Ferns and back would have occupied some time.”

“ Perhaps so,” answered Mr. Dunbar ; “ I did not know the distance to the Ferns, and I did not make any calculation as to time. I merely said to

the deceased, 'I shall go back and look at the cathedral; and I will wait for you there.' I said this, and I told him to be as quick as he could."

"That was all that passed between you?"

"It was. I then returned to the cathedral."

"And you waited there for the deceased?"

"I did. I waited until close upon the hour at which I had ordered dinner at the George."

There was a pause, during which the coroner looked very thoughtful.

"I am compelled to ask you one more question, Mr. Dunbar," he said, presently, hesitating a little as he spoke.

"I am ready to answer any questions you may wish to ask," Mr. Dunbar replied, very quietly.

"Were you upon friendly terms with the deceased?"

"I have just told you so. We were on excellent terms. I found him an agreeable companion. His manners were those of a gentleman. I don't know how he had picked up his education, but he certainly had contrived to educate himself somehow or other."

“I understand you were friendly together at the time of his death; but prior to that time——”

Mr. Dunbar smiled.

“I have been in India five-and-thirty years,” he said.

“Precisely. But before your departure for India, had you any misunderstanding, any serious quarrel with the deceased?”

Mr. Dunbar's face flushed suddenly, and his brows contracted, as if even his self-possession were not proof against the unpleasant memories of the past.

“No,” he said, with determination; “I never quarrelled with him.”

“There had been no cause of quarrel between you?”

“I don't understand your question. I have told you that I never quarrelled with him.”

“Perhaps not; but there might have been some hidden animosity, some smothered feeling, stronger than any openly expressed anger, hidden in your breast. Was there any such feeling?”

“Not on my part.”

“Was there any such feeling on the part of the deceased?”

Mr. Dunbar looked furtively at William Balderby. The junior partner’s eyelids dropped under that stolen glance.

It was clear that he knew the story of the forged bills.

Had the coroner for Winchester been a clever man, he would have followed that glance of Mr. Dunbar’s, and would have understood that the junior partner knew something about the antecedents of the dead man. But the coroner was not a very close observer, and Mr. Dunbar’s eager glance escaped him altogether.

“Yes,” answered the Anglo-Indian, “Joseph Wilmot had a grudge against me before I sailed for Calcutta, but we settled all that at Southampton, and I promised to allow him an annuity.”

“You promised him an annuity?”

“Yes—not a very large one—only fifty pounds a-year; but he was quite satisfied with that promise.”

“He had some claim upon you, then?”

“No, he had no claim whatever upon me,” replied Mr. Dunbar, haughtily.

Of course it could be scarcely pleasant for a millionaire to be cross-questioned in this manner by an impertinent Hampshire coroner.

The jurymen sympathised with the banker.

The coroner looked rather puzzled.

“If the deceased had no claim upon you, why did you promise him an annuity?” he asked, after a pause.

“I made that promise for the sake of ‘auld lang syne,’” answered Mr. Dunbar. “Joseph Wilmot was a favourite servant of mine five-and-thirty years ago. We were young men together. I believe that he had, at one time, a very sincere affection for me. I know that I always liked him.”

“How long were you in the grove with the deceased?”

“Not more than ten minutes.”

“And you cannot describe the spot where you left him?”

“Not very easily; I could point it out, perhaps, if I were taken there.”

“What time elapsed between your leaving the cathedral yard with the deceased and your returning to it without him?”

“Perhaps half an hour.”

“Not longer?”

“No; I do not imagine that it can have been longer.”

“Thank you, Mr. Dunbar; that will do for the present,” said the coroner.

The banker returned to his seat.

Arthur Lovell, still watching him, saw that his strong white hand trembled a little as his fingers trifled with those glittering toys hanging to his watch-chain.

The verger was the next person examined.

He described how he had been loitering in the yard of the cathedral as the two men passed across it. He told how they had gone by arm-in-arm, laughing and talking together.

“Which of them was talking as they passed you?” asked the coroner.

“Mr. Dunbar.”

“Could you hear what he was saying?”

“No, sir. I could hear his voice, but I couldn’t hear the words.”

“What time elapsed between Mr. Dunbar and the deceased leaving the cathedral yard, and Mr. Dunbar returning alone?”

The verger scratched his head, and looked doubtfully at Henry Dunbar.

That gentleman was looking straight before him, and seemed quite unconscious of the verger’s glance.

“I can’t quite exactly say how long it was, sir,” the old man answered, after a pause.

“Why can’t you say exactly?”

“Because, you see, sir, I didn’t keep no particular count of the time, and I shouldn’t like to tell a falsehood.”

“You must not tell a falsehood. We want the truth, and nothing but the truth.”

“I know, sir; but you see I am an old man, and my memory is not as good as it used to be. I *think* Mr. Dunbar was away an hour.”

Arthur Lovell gave an involuntary start. Every one of the jurymen looked suddenly at Mr. Dunbar.

But the Anglo-Indian did not flinch. He was looking at the verger now with a quiet steady gaze, which seemed that of a man who had nothing to fear, and who was serene and undisturbed by reason of his innocence.

"We don't want to know what you *think*," the coroner said; "you must tell us only what you are certain of."

"Then I'm not certain, sir."

"You are not certain that Mr. Dunbar was absent for an hour?"

"Not quite certain, sir."

"But very nearly certain. Is that so?"

"Yes, sir; I'm very nearly certain. You see, sir, when the two gentlemen went through the yard, the cathedral clock was chiming the quarter after four; I remember that. And when Mr. Dunbar came back, I was just going away to my tea, and I seldom go to my tea until it's gone five."

"But supposing it to have struck five when Mr. Dunbar returned, that would only make it three-quarters of an hour after the time at which he went through the yard, supposing him to have

gone through, as you say, at the quarter past four."

The verger scratched his head again.

"I'd been loiterin' about yesterday afternoon, sir," he said; "and I was a bit late thinkin' of my tea."

"And you believe, therefore, that Mr. Dunbar was absent for an hour?"

"Yes, sir; an hour—or more."

"An hour, or more?"

"Yes, sir."

"He was absent more than an hour; do you mean to say that?"

"It might have been more, sir. I didn't keep no particular count of the time."

Arthur Lovell had taken out his pocket-book, and was making notes of the verger's evidence.

The old man went on to describe his having shown Mr. Dunbar all over the cathedral. He made no mention of that sudden faintness which had seized upon the Anglo-Indian at the door of one of the chapels; but he described the rich man's manner as having been affable in the ex-

treme. He told how Henry Dunbar had loitered at the door of the cathedral, and afterwards lingered in the quadrangle, waiting for the coming of his servant. He told all this with many encomiums upon the rich man's pleasant manner.

The next, and perhaps the most important, witnesses were the two labourers, Philip Murtock and Patrick Hennessy, who had found the body of the murdered man.

Patrick Hennessy was sent out of the room while Murtock gave his evidence; but the evidence of the two men tallied in every particular.

They were Irishmen, reapers, and were returning from a harvest supper at a farm five miles from St. Cross, upon the previous evening. One of them had knelt down upon the edge of the stream to get a drink of water in the crown of his felt hat, and had been horrified by seeing the face of the dead man looking up at him in the moonlight, through the shallow water that barely covered it. The two men had dragged the body out of the streamlet, and Philip Murtock had watched beside it while Patrick Hennessy had gone to seek assistance.

The dead man's clothes had been stripped from him, with the exception of his trousers and boots, and the upper part of his body was bare. There was a revolting brutality in this fact. It seemed that the murderer had stripped his victim for the sake of the clothes which he had worn. There could be little doubt, therefore, that the murder had been committed for the greed of gain, and not from any motive of revenge.

Arthur Lovell breathed more freely ; until this moment his mind had been racked in agonising doubts. Dark suspicions had been working in his breast. He had been tortured by the idea that the Anglo-Indian had murdered his old servant, in order to remove out of his way the chief witness of the crime of his youth.

But if this had been so, the murderer would never have lingered upon the scene of his crime in order to strip the clothes from his victim's body.

No ! the deed had doubtless been done by some savage wretch, some lost and ignorant creature, hardened by a long life of crime, preying like a wild beast upon his fellow-men.

Such murders are done in the world. Blood has been shed for the sake of some prize so small, so paltry, that it has been difficult for men to believe that one human being could destroy another for such an object.

Heaven have pity upon the wretch so lost as to be separated from his fellow-creatures by reason of the vileness of his nature! Heaven strengthen the hands of those who seek to spread Christian enlightenment and education through the land! for it is only those blessings that will thin the crowded prison-wards, and rob the gallows of its victims.

The robbery of the dead man's clothes, and such property as he might have had about him at the time of his death, gave a new aspect to the murder in the eyes of Arthur Lovell. The case was clear and plain now, and the young man's duty was no longer loathsome to him; for he no longer suspected Henry Dunbar.

The constabulary had already been busy; the spot upon which the murder had been committed, and the neighbourhood of that spot, had been dili-

gently searched. But no vestige of the dead man's garments had been found.

The medical man's evidence was very brief. He stated, that when he arrived at the Foresters' Arms he found the deceased quite dead, and that he appeared to have been dead some hours; that from the bruises and marks on the throat and neck, some contusions on the back of the head, and other appearances on the body, which witness minutely described, he said there were indications of a struggle having taken place between deceased and some other person or persons; that the man had been thrown, or had fallen down violently; and that death had ultimately been caused by strangling and suffocation.

The coroner questioned the surgeon very closely as to how long he thought the murdered man had been dead. The medical man declined to give any positive statement on this point; he could only say that when he was called in, the body was cold, and that the deceased might have been dead three hours—or he might have been dead five hours. It was impossible to form an opinion with regard

to the exact time at which death had taken place.

The evidence of the waiter and the landlord of the George only went to show that the two men had arrived at the hotel together; that they had appeared in very high spirits, and on excellent terms with each other; that Mr. Dunbar had shown very great concern and anxiety about the absence of his companion, and had declined to eat his dinner until nine o'clock.

This closed the evidence; and the jury retired.

They were absent about a quarter of an hour, and then returned a verdict of wilful murder against some person or persons unknown.

Henry Dunbar, Arthur Lovell, and Mr. Balderby went back to the hotel. It was past six o'clock when the coroner's inquest was concluded, and the three men sat down to dinner together at seven.

That dinner-party was not a pleasant one; there was a feeling of oppression upon the minds of the three men. The awful event of the previous day cast its dreadful shadow upon them. They could

not talk freely of this subject—for it was too ghastly a theme for discussion—and to talk of any other seemed almost impossible.

Arthur Lovell had observed with surprise that Henry Dunbar had not once spoken of his daughter. And yet this was scarcely strange; the utterance of that name might have jarred upon the father's feelings at such a time as this.

“You will write to Miss Dunbar to-night, will you not, sir?” the young man said at last. “I fear that she will have been very anxious about you all this day. She was alarmed by your message to Mr. Balderby.”

“I shall not write,” said the banker; “for I hope to see my daughter to-night.”

“You will leave Winchester this evening, then?”

“Yes, by the 10.15 express. I should have travelled by that train yesterday evening but for this terrible event.”

Arthur Lovell looked rather astonished at this.

“You are surprised,” said Mr. Dunbar.

“I thought perhaps that you might stay—until—”

“Until what?” asked the Anglo-Indian; “every thing is finished, is it not? The inquest was concluded to-day. I shall leave full directions for the burial of this poor fellow, and an ample sum for his funeral expenses. I spoke to the coroner upon that subject this afternoon. What more can I do?”

“Nothing, certainly,” answered Arthur Lovell, with rather a hesitating manner; “but I thought, under the peculiar circumstances, it might be better that you should remain upon the spot, if possible, until some steps shall have been taken for the finding of the murderer.”

He did not like to give utterance to the thought that was in his mind; for he was thinking that some people would perhaps suspect Mr. Dunbar himself, and that it might be well for him to remain upon the scene of the murder until that suspicion should be done away with by the arrest of the real murderer.

The banker shook his head.

“I very much doubt the discovery of the guilty man,” he said; “what is there to hinder his escape?”

“Every thing,” answered Arthur Lovell, warmly. “First, the stupidity of guilt, the blind besotted folly which so often betrays the murderer. It is not the commission of a crime only that is horrible; think of the hideous state of the criminal’s mind *after* the deed is done. And it is at that time, immediately after the crime has been perpetrated, when the breast of the murderer is like a raging hell; it is at that time that he is called upon to be most circumspect—to keep guard upon his every look, his smallest word, his most trivial action,—for he knows that every look and action is watched; that every word is greedily listened to by men who are eager to bring his guilt home to him; by hungry men, wrestling for his conviction as a result that will bring them a golden reward; by practised men, who have studied the philosophy of crime, and who, by reason of their peculiar skill, are able to read dark meanings in words and looks that to other people are like a strange language.

He knows that the scent of blood is in the air, and that the bloodhounds are at their loathsome work. He knows this; and at such a time he is called upon to face the world with a bold front, and so to fashion his words and looks that he shall deceive the secret watchers. He is never alone. The servant who waits upon him, or the railway guard who shows him to his seat in the first-class carriage, the porter who carries his luggage, or the sailor who looks at him scrutinisingly as he breathes the fresh sea-air upon the deck of that ship which is to carry him to a secure hiding-place—any one of these may be a disguised detective, and at any moment the bolt may fall; he may feel the light hand upon his shoulder, and know that he is a doomed man. Who can wonder, then, that a criminal is generally a coward, and that he betrays himself by some blind folly of his own?"

The young man had been carried away by his subject, and had spoken with a strange energy.

Mr. Dunbar laughed aloud at the lawyer's enthusiasm.

"You should have been a barrister, Mr. Lo-

vell," he said; "that would have been a capital opening for your speech as counsel for the crown. I can see the wretched criminal shivering in the dock, cowering under that burst of forensic eloquence."

Henry Dunbar laughed heartily as he finished speaking, and then threw himself back in his easy-chair, and passed his handkerchief across his handsome forehead, as it was his habit to do occasionally.

"In this case I think the criminal will be most likely arrested," Arthur Lovell continued, still dwelling upon the subject of the murder; "he will be traced by those clothes. He will endeavour to sell them, of course; and as he is most likely some wretchedly-ignorant boor, he will very probably try to sell them within a few miles of the scene of the crime."

"I hope he will be found," said Mr. Balderby, filling his glass with claret as he spoke; "I never heard any good of this man Wilmot, and, indeed, I believe he went to the bad altogether after you left England, Mr. Dunbar."

“ Indeed !”

“ Yes,” answered the junior partner, looking rather nervously at his chief; “ he committed forgery, I believe; fabricated forged bank-notes, or something of that kind, and was transported for life, I heard; but I suppose he got a remission of his sentence, or something of that kind, and returned to England.”

“ I had no idea of this,” said Mr. Dunbar.

“ He did not tell you, then?”

“ Oh, no; it was scarcely likely that he should tell me.”

Very little more was said upon the subject just then. At nine o'clock Mr. Dunbar left the room to see to the packing of his things; at a little before ten the three gentlemen drove away from the George Hotel, on their way to the station.

They reached the station at five minutes past ten; the train was not due until a quarter past.

Mr. Balderby went to the office to procure the three tickets. Henry Dunbar and Arthur Lovell walked arm-in-arm up and down the platform.

As the bell for the up-train was ringing, a man

came suddenly upon the platform and looked about him.

He recognised the banker, walked straight up to him, and taking off his hat, addressed Mr. Dunbar respectfully.

“ I am sorry to detain you, sir,” he said ; “ but I have a warrant to prevent you leaving Winchester.”

“ What do you mean ?”

“ I hold a warrant for your apprehension, sir.”

“ From whom ?”

“ From Sir Arden Westhorpe, our chief county magistrate ; and I am to take you before him immediately, sir.”

“ Upon what charge ?” cried Arthur Lovell.

“ Upon suspicion of having been concerned in the murder of Joseph Wilmot.”

The millionaire drew himself up haughtily, and looked at the constable with a proud smile.

“ This is too absurd,” he said ; “ but I am quite ready to go with you. Be good enough to telegraph to my daughter, Mr. Lovell,” he added, turning to the young man ; “ tell her that circum-

stances over which I have no control will detain me in Winchester for a week. Take care not to alarm her."

Every body about the station had collected on the platform, and made a circle about Mr. Dunbar. They stood a little aloof from him, looking at him with respectful interest: altogether different from the eager clamorous curiosity with which they would have regarded any ordinary man suspected of the same crime.

He was suspected; but he could not be guilty. Why should a millionaire commit a murder? The motives that might influence other men could have had no weight with him.

The bystanders repeated this to one another, as they followed Mr. Dunbar and his custodian from the station, loudly indignant against the minions of the law.

Mr. Dunbar, the constable, and Mr. Balderby drove straight to the magistrate's house.

The junior partner offered any amount of bail for his chief; but the Anglo-Indian motioned him to silence, with a haughty gesture.

“I thank you, Mr. Balderby,” he said, proudly; “but I will not accept my liberty on sufferance. Sir Arden Westhorpe has chosen to arrest me, and I shall abide the issue of that arrest.”

It was in vain that the junior partner protested against this. Henry Dunbar was inflexible.

“I hope, and I venture to believe that you are as innocent as I am myself of this horrible crime, Mr. Dunbar,” the baronet said, kindly; “and I sympathise with you in this very terrible position. But upon the information laid before me, I consider it my duty to detain you until the matter shall have been further investigated. You were the last person seen with the deceased.”

“And for that reason it is supposed that I strangled my old servant for the sake of his clothes,” cried Mr. Dunbar, bitterly. “I am a stranger in England; but if that is your English law, I am not sorry that the best part of my life has been passed in India. However, I am perfectly willing to submit to any examination that may be considered necessary to the furtherance of justice.”

So, upon the second night of his arrival in England, Henry Dunbar, chief of the wealthy house of Dunbar, Dunbar, and Balderby, slept in Winchester gaol.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE PRISONER IS REMANDED.

MR. DUNBAR was brought before Sir Arden Westhorpe, at ten o'clock, on the morning after his arrest. The witnesses who had given evidence at the inquest were again summoned, and—with the exception of the verger, and Mr. Dunbar, who was now a prisoner—gave the same evidence, or evidence to the same effect.

Arthur Lovell again watched the proceedings in the interest of Laura's father, and cross-examined some of the witnesses.

But very little new evidence was elicited. The empty pocket-book, which had been found a few paces from the body, was produced. The rope by which the murdered man had been strangled, was also produced and examined.

It was a common rope, rather slender, and

about a yard and a half in length. It was made into a running noose, that had been drawn tightly round the neck of the victim.

Had the victim been a strong man, he might perhaps have resisted the attack, and might have prevented his assailant tightening the fatal knot: but the surgeon bore witness that the dead man, though tall and stalwart-looking, had not been strong.

It was a strange murder,—a bloodless murder: a deed that must have been done by a man of unfaltering resolution and iron nerve: for it must have been the work of a moment, in which the victim's first cry of surprise was stifled ere it was half uttered.

The chief witness upon this day was the verger; and it was in consequence of certain remarks dropped by him that Henry Dunbar had been arrested.

Upon the afternoon of the inquest this official had found himself a person of considerable importance. He was surrounded by eager gossips, greedy to hear any thing he might have to tell

upon the subject of the murder; and amongst those who listened to his talk was one of the constables,—a sharp, clear-headed fellow,—who was on the watch for any hint that might point to the secret of Joseph Wilmot's death. The verger, in describing the events of the previous afternoon, spoke of that one fact which he had omitted to refer to before the coroner. He spoke of the sudden faintness which had come over Mr. Dunbar.

“Poor gentleman!” he said, “I don't think I ever see the like of any thing as come over him so sudden. He walked along the aisle with his head up, dashing and millingtary-like; but, all in a minute, he reeled as if he'd been dead drunk, and he would have fell, if there hadn't been a bench handy. Down he dropped upon that bench like a stone; and when I turned round to look at him the drops of perspiration was rollin' down his forehead like beads. I never see such a face in my life; as ghashly-like as if he'd seen a ghost. But he was laughin' and smilin' the next minute; and it was only the heat of the weather, he says.”

“It's odd as a gentleman that's just come

home from India should complain of the heat on such a day as yesterday," said one of the bystanders.

This was the substance of the evidence that the verger gave before Sir Arden Westhorpe. This, with the evidence of a boy, who had met the deceased and Henry Dunbar close to the spot where the body was found, was the only evidence against the rich man.

To the mind of Sir Arden Westhorpe the agitation displayed by Henry Dunbar in the cathedral was a very strong point: yet, what more possible than that the Anglo-Indian should have been seized with a momentary giddiness? He was not a young man; and though his broad chest, square shoulders, and long, muscular arms, betokened strength, that natural vigour might have been impaired by the effects of a warm climate.

There were new witnesses upon this day; people who testified to having been in the neighbourhood of the grove, and in the grove itself, upon that fatal afternoon and evening.

Other labourers, besides the two Irishmen, had

passed beneath the shadow of the trees in the moonlight. Idle pedestrians had strolled through the grove in the still twilight : not one of these had seen Joseph Wilmot, nor had there been heard any cry of anguish, or wild shrieks of terror.

One man deposed to having met a rough-looking fellow, half-gipsy, half-hawker, in the grove, between seven and eight o'clock.

Arthur Lovell questioned this person as to the appearance and manner of the man he had met.

But the witness declared that there was nothing peculiar in the man's manner. He had not seemed confused, or excited, or hurried, or frightened. He was a coarse-featured, sunburnt, ruffianly-looking fellow ; and that was all.

Mr. Balderby was examined, and swore to the splendid position which Henry Dunbar occupied as chief of the house in St. Gundolph Lane ; and then the examination was adjourned, and the prisoner remanded, although Arthur Lovell contended that there was no evidence to justify his detention.

Mr. Dunbar still protested against any offer of bail : he again declared that he would rather

remain in prison than accept his liberty on sufferance, and go out into the world a suspected man.

“I will never leave Winchester Gaol,” he said, “until I leave it with my character cleared in the eyes of every living creature.”

He had been treated with the greatest respect by the prison officials, and had been provided with comfortable apartments. Arthur Lovell and Mr. Balderby were admitted to him whenever he chose to receive them.

Meanwhile every voice in Winchester was loud in indignation against those who had caused the detention of the millionaire.

Here was an English gentleman, a man whose wealth was something fabulous, newly returned from India, eager to embrace his only child; and before he had done more than set his foot upon his native soil, he was seized upon by obstinate and pig-headed officials, and thrown into a prison.

Arthur Lovell worked nobly in the service of Laura's father. He did not particularly like the man, though he wished to like him; but he believed him to be innocent of the dreadful crime

imputed to him, and he was determined to make that innocence clear to the eyes of other people.

For this purpose he urged-on the police upon the track of the strange man, the rough-looking hawker, who had been seen in the grove on the day of the murder.

He himself left Winchester upon another errand. He went away with the determination of discovering the sick man, Sampson Wilmot. The old clerk's evidence might be most important in such a case as this; as he would perhaps be able to throw much light upon the antecedents and associations of the dead man.

The young lawyer travelled along the line, stopping at every station. At Basingstoke he was informed that an old man, travelling with his brother, had been taken ill; and that he had since died. An inquest had been held upon his remains some days before, and he had been buried by the parish.

It was upon the 21st of August that Arthur Lovell visited Basingstoke. The people at the village inn told him that the old man had died

at two o'clock upon the morning of the 17th, only a few hours after his brother's desertion of him. He had never spoken after the final stroke of paralysis.

There was nothing to be learned here, therefore. Death had closed the lips of this witness.

But even if Sampson Wilnot had lived to speak, what could he have told? The dead man's antecedents could have thrown little light upon the way in which he had met his death. It was a common murder, after all; a murder that had been done for the sake of the victim's little property; a silver watch, perhaps; a few sovereigns; a coat, waistcoat, and shirt.

The only evidence that tended in the least to implicate Henry Dunbar was the fact that he had been the last person seen in company with the dead man, and the discrepancy between his assertion and that of the verger respecting the time during which he had been absent from the cathedral yard.

No magistrate in his senses would commit the Anglo-Indian for trial upon such evidence as this.

CHAPTER XIV.

MARGARET'S JOURNEY.

WHILE these things were taking place at Winchester, Margaret waited for the coming of her father. She waited until her heart grew sick, but still she did not despair of his return. He had promised to come back to her by ten o'clock upon the evening of the 16th; but he was not a man who always kept his promises. He had often left her in the same manner, and had stayed away for days and weeks together.

There was nothing extraordinary, therefore, in his absence; and if the girl's heart grew sick, it was not with the fear that her father would not return to her; but with the thought of what dishonest work he might be engaged in during his absence.

She knew now that he led a dishonest life.

His own lips had told her the cruel truth. She would no longer be able to defend him when people spoke against him. Henceforth she must only plead for him.

The poor girl had been proud of her father, reprobate though he was; she had been proud of his gentlemanly bearing, his cleverness, his air of superiority over other men of his station; and the thought of his acknowledged guilt stung her to the heart. She pitied him, and she tried to make excuses for him in her own mind: and with every thought of the penniless reprobate there was intermingled the memory of the wrong that had been done him by Henry Dunbar.

"If my father has been guilty, that man is answerable for his guilt," she thought perpetually.

Meanwhile, she waited, heaven only knows how anxiously, for her father's coming. A week passed, and another week began, and still he did not come; but she was not alarmed for his personal safety, she was only anxious about him; and she expected his return every day, every hour. But he did not come.

And all this time, with her mind racked by anxious thoughts, the girl went about the weary duties of her daily life. Her thoughts might wander away into vague speculations about her father's absence while she sat by her pupil's side ; but her eyes never wandered from the fingers it was her duty to watch. Her life had been a hard one, and she was better able to hide her sorrows and anxieties than any one to whom such a burden had been a novelty. So very few people suspected that there was any thing amiss with the grave young music-mistress.

One person did see the vague change in her manner ; but that person was Clement Austin, who had already grown skilled in reading the varying expressions of her face, and who saw now that she was changed. She listened to him when he talked to her of the books or the music she loved ; but her face never lighted up now with a bright look of pleasure ; and he heard her sigh now and then as she gave her lesson.

He asked her once if there was any thing in which his services, or his mother's, could be of

any assistance to her ; but she thanked him for the kindness of his offer, and told him, " No, there was nothing in which he could help her."

" But I am sure there is something on your mind. Pray do not think me intrusive or impertinent for saying so ; but I am sure of it."

Margaret only shook her head.

" I am mistaken, then?" said Clement, interrogatively.

" You are indeed. I have no special trouble. I am only a little uneasy about my father, who has been away from home for the last week or two. But there is nothing strange in that ; he is often away. Only I am apt to be foolishly anxious about him. He will scold me when he comes home and hears that I have been so."

Upon the evening of the 27th August, Margaret gave her accustomed lesson, and lingered a little as usual after the lesson, talking to Mrs. Austin, who had taken a wonderful fancy to her granddaughter's music-mistress ; and to Clement, who somehow or other had discontinued his summer evening walks of late, more especially on

those occasions on which his niece took her music-lessons. They talked of all manner of things, and it was scarcely strange that amongst other topics they should come by and by to the Winchester murder.

“By the by, Miss Wentworth,” exclaimed Mrs. Austin, breaking in upon Clement’s disquisition on his favourite Carlyle’s “Hero-Worship;” “I suppose you’ve heard about this dreadful murder that is making such a sensation?”

“A dreadful murder — no, Mrs. Austin; I rarely hear any thing of that kind; for the person with whom I lodge is old and deaf. She troubles herself very little about what is going on in the world, and I never read the newspapers myself.”

“Indeed,” said Mrs. Austin; “well, my dear, you really surprise me. I thought this dreadful business had made such a sensation, on account of the great Mr. Dunbar being mixed up in it.”

“Mr. Dunbar!” cried Margaret, looking at the speaker with dilated eyes.

“Yes, my dear, Mr. Dunbar, the rich banker. I have been very much interested in the matter,

because my son is employed in Mr. Dunbar's bank. It seems that an old servant, a confidential valet of Mr. Dunbar's, has been murdered at Winchester; and at first Mr. Dunbar himself was suspected of the crime,—though, of course, that was utterly ridiculous; for what motive could he possibly have had for murdering his old servant? However, he has been suspected, and some stupid country magistrate actually had him arrested. There was an examination about a week ago, which was adjourned until to-day. We shan't know the result of it till to-morrow."

Margaret sat listening to these words with a face that was as white as the face of the dead.

Clement Austin saw the sudden change that had come over her countenance.

"Mother," he said, "you should not talk of these things before Miss Wentworth; you have made her look quite ill. Remember, she may not be so strong-minded as you are."

"No, no!" gasped Margaret, in a choking voice, "I—I—wish to hear of this. Tell me, Mrs. Austin, what was the name of the murdered man?"

“Joseph Wilmot!”

“Joseph Wilmot!” repeated Margaret, slowly. She had always known her father by the name of James Wentworth; but what more likely than that Wilmot was his real name? She had good reason to suspect that Wentworth was a false one.

“I’ll lend you a newspaper,” Mrs. Austin said, good-naturedly, “if you really want to learn the particulars of this murder.”

“I do, if you please.”

Mrs. Austin took a weekly paper from amongst some others that were scattered upon a side-table. She folded up this paper and handed it to Margaret.

“Give Miss Wentworth a glass of wine, mother,” exclaimed Clement Austin; “I’m sure all this talk about the murder has upset her.”

“No, no, indeed!” Margaret answered, “I would rather not take any thing. I want to get home quickly. Good evening, Mrs. Austin.”

She tried to say something more, but her voice failed her. She had been in the habit of shaking hands with Mrs. Austin and Clement

when she left them ; and the cashier had always accompanied her to the gate, and had sometimes lingered with her there in the dusk, prolonging some conversation that had been begun in the drawing-room : but to-night she hurried from the room before the widow could remonstrate with her. Clement followed her into the hall.

“ Miss Wentworth,” he said, “ I know that something has agitated you. Pray return to the drawing-room, and stop with us until you are more composed.”

“ No—no—no !”

“ Let me see you home, then ?”

“ Oh ! no ! no !” she cried, as the young man barred her passage to the door ; “ for pity’s sake don’t detain me, Mr. Austin ; don’t detain me, or follow me !”

She passed by him, and hurried out of the house. He followed her to the gate, and watched her disappear in the twilight ; and then went back to the drawing-room, sighing heavily as he went.

“ I have no right to follow her against her own wish,” he said to himself. “ She has given

me no right to interfere with her ; or to think of her, for the matter of that."

He threw himself into a chair, and took up a newspaper ; but he did not read half-a-dozen lines. He sat with his eyes fixed upon the page before him, thinking of Margaret Wentworth.

"Poor girl!" he said to himself, presently ; "poor, lonely girl ! She is too pure and beautiful for the hard struggles of this world."

* * * *

Margaret Wentworth walked rapidly along the road that led her back to Wandsworth. She held the folded newspaper clutched tightly against her breast. It was her death-warrant, perhaps. She never paused or slackened her pace until she reached the lane leading down to the water.

She opened the gate of the simple cottage-garden—there was no need of bolts or locks for the fortification of Godolphin Cottages—and went up to her own little sitting-room ; the room in which her father had told her the secret of his life,—the room in which she had sworn to remember the name of Henry Dunbar. All was dark

and quiet in the house, for the mistress of it was elderly and old-fashioned in her ways; and Margaret was accustomed to wait upon herself when she came home after nightfall.

She struck a lucifer, lighted her candle, and sat down with the newspaper in her hand. She unfolded it, and examined the pages. She was not long finding what she wanted.

“*The Winchester Murder. Latest particulars.*”

Margaret Wentworth read that horrible story. She read the newspaper record of the cruel deed that had been done—twice—slowly and deliberately. Her eyes were tearless, and there was a desperate courage at her heart; that miserable, agonised heart, which seemed like a block of ice in her breast.

“I swore to remember the name of Henry Dunbar,” she said in a low, sombre voice; “I have good reason to remember it now.”

From the first she had no doubt in her mind—from the very first she had but one idea: and that idea was a conviction. Her father had been murdered by his old master. The man Joseph

Wilmot was her father : the murderer was Henry Dunbar. The newspaper record told how the murdered man had, according to his own account, met his brother at the Waterloo station upon the afternoon of the 16th of August. That was the very afternoon upon which James Wentworth had left his daughter to go to London by rail.

He had met his old master, the man who had so bitterly injured him ; the cold-hearted scoundrel who had so cruelly betrayed him. He had been violent perhaps, and had threatened Henry Dunbar : and then—then the rich man, treacherous and cold-hearted in his age as in his youth, had beguiled his old valet by a pretended friendship, had lured him into a lonely place, and had there murdered him ; in order that all the wicked secrets of the past might be buried with his victim.

As to the robbery of the clothes—the rifling of the pocket-book—that, of course, was only a part of Henry Dunbar's deep-laid scheme.

The girl folded the paper and put it in her breast. It was a strange document to lie against

that virginal bosom: and the breast beneath it ached with a sick, cold pain, that was like the pain of death.

Margaret took up her candle, and went into a neatly-kept little room at the back of the house,—the room in which her father had always slept when he stayed in that house.

There was an old box, a battered and dilapidated hair-trunk, with a worn rope knotted about it. The girl knelt down before the box, and put her candle on a chair beside it. Then with her slender fingers she tried to unfasten the knots that secured the cord. This task was not an easy one, and her fingers ached before she had done. But she succeeded at last, and lifted the lid of the trunk.

There were worn and shabby garments, tumbled and dusty, that had been thrown pell-mell into the box: there were broken meerschaum-pipes; old newspapers, pale with age, and with passages here and there marked by thick strokes in faded ink. A faint effluvium that arose from the mass of dilapidated rubbish—the weeds which the

great ocean Time casts up upon the shore of the present—testified to the neighbourhood of mice : and scattered about the bottom of the box, amongst loose shreds of tobacco—broken lumps of petrified cavendish—and scraps of paper, there were a few letters.

Margaret gathered together these letters, and examined them. Three of them—very old, faded, and flabby—were directed to “Joseph Wilmot, care of the Governor of Norfolk Island,” in a prim, clerk-like hand.

It was an ominous address. Margaret Wentworth bowed her head upon her knees and sobbed aloud.

“He had been very wicked, and had need of a long life of penitence,” she thought ; “but he has been murdered by Henry Dunbar.”

There was no shadow of doubt now in her mind. She had in her own hand the conclusive proof of the identity between Joseph Wilmot and her father ; and to her this seemed quite enough to prove that Henry Dunbar was the murderer of his old servant. He had injured the man ;

and it was in the man's power to do him injury. He had resolved, therefore, to get rid of this old accomplice,—this dangerous witness of the past.

This was how Margaret reasoned. That the crime committed in the quiet grove, near St. Cross, was an every-day deed, done for the most pitiful and sordid motives that can tempt a man to shed his brother's blood, never for a moment entered into her thoughts. Other people might think this, in their ignorance of the story of the past.

At daybreak, the next morning, she left the house, after giving a very brief explanation of her departure to the old woman with whom she lodged. She took the first train to Winchester, and reached the station two hours before noon. She had her whole stock of money with her, but nothing else. Her own wants, her own necessities, had no place in her thoughts. Her errand was a fearful one; for she went to tell so much as she knew of the story of the past, and to bear witness against Henry Dunbar.

The railway official to whom she addressed herself at the Winchester station treated her with civility and good-nature. The pale beauty of her pensive face won her friends wherever she went. It is very hard upon pug-nosed merit and red-haired virtue, that a Grecian profile, or raven-tresses, should be such an excellent letter of introduction: but, unhappily, human nature is weak: and while beauty appeals straight to the eye of the frivolous, merit requires to be appreciated by the wise.

“If there is any thing I can do for you, miss,” the railway official said, politely, “I shall be very happy, I’m sure——”

“I want to know about the murder,” the girl answered, in a low tremulous voice; “the murder that was committed——”

“Yes, miss, to be sure. Every body in Winchester is talking about it; a most mysterious event! But,” cried the official, brightening suddenly, “you ain’t a witness, miss, are you? You don’t know any thing about——eh?”

He was quite excited at the bare idea that this

pretty girl had something to say about the murder, and that he might have the privilege of introducing her to his fellow-citizens. To know anybody who knew any thing about Joseph Wilmot's murder, was to occupy a post of some distinction in Winchester just now.

"Yes," Margaret said; "I want to give evidence against Henry Dunbar."

The railway official started, and stared aghast.

"Evidence against Mr. Dunbar, miss?" he said; "why, Mr. Henry Dunbar was dismissed from custody only yesterday afternoon, and is going up to town by the express this night, and every body in Winchester is full of the shameful way in which he has been treated. Why, as far as that goes, there was no more ground for suspecting Mr. Dunbar—not that has come out yet, at any rate—than there is for suspecting me!" And the porter snapped his fingers contemptuously. "But if you know any thing against Mr. Dunbar, why, of course, that alters the case; and it's yer bounden dooty, miss, to go before the magistrate directly—minute and make yer statement."

The porter could hardly refrain from smacking his lips with an air of relish as he said this. Distinction had come to him unsought.

“Wait a minute, miss,” he said; “I’ll go and ask lief to take you round to the magistrate’s. You’ll never find your way by yourself. The next up isn’t till 12.7—I can be spared.”

The porter ran away, presented himself to a higher official, told his story, and obtained a brief leave of absence. Then he returned to Margaret.

“Now, miss,” he said, “if you’ll come along with me, I’ll take you to Sir Arden Westhorpe’s house. Sir Arden is the gentleman that has taken so much trouble with this case.”

On the way through the back-streets of the quiet city, the porter would fain have extracted from Margaret all that she had to tell. But the girl would reveal nothing: she only said that she wanted to bear witness against Henry Dunbar.

The porter, upon the other hand, was very communicative. He told his companion what had happened at the adjourned examination.

“There was a deal of applause in the court

when Mr. Dunbar was told he might consider himself free," said the porter; "but Sir Arden checked it; there was no need for clapping of hands, he says, or for any thing but sorrow that such a wicked deed had been done, and that the cruel wretch as did it should escape. A young man as was in the court told me that them was Sir Arden's exack words."

They had reached Sir Arden's house by this time. It was a very handsome house, though it stood in a back street: and a grave man-servant, in a linen jacket, admitted Margaret into the oak-panelled hall.

She might have had some difficulty, perhaps, in seeing Sir Arden, had not the railway porter immediately declared her business. But the name of the murdered man was a passport; and she was ushered at once into a low room, which was lined with book-shelves, and opened into an old-fashioned garden.

Here Sir Arden Westhorpe, the magistrate, sat at a table writing. He was an elderly man, with gray hair and whiskers, and with rather a stern expression of countenance. But he was a good and

a just man : and though Henry Dunbar had been the emperor of half Europe, instead of an Anglo-Indian banker, Sir Arden would have committed him for trial, had he seen just cause for so doing.

Margaret was in nowise abashed by the presence of the magistrate. She had but one thought in her mind—the thought of her father's wrongs ; and she could have spoken freely in the presence of a king.

“ I hope I am not too late, sir,” she said ; “ I hear that Mr. Dunbar has been discharged from custody. I hope I am not too late to bear witness against him.”

The magistrate looked up with an expression of surprise. “ That will depend upon circumstances,” he said ; “ that is to say, upon the nature of the statement which you may have to make.”

The magistrate summoned his clerk from an adjoining room, and then took down the girl's information.

But he shook his head doubtfully when Margaret had told him all she had to tell. That which to the impulsive girl seemed proof positive of

Henry Dunbar's guilt, was very little when written down in a business-like manner by Sir Arden Westhorpe's clerk.

“ You know your unhappy father to have been injured by Mr. Dunbar, and you think that he may have been in the possession of secrets of a damaging nature to that gentleman ; but you do not know what those secrets were. My poor girl, I cannot possibly move in this business upon such evidence as this. The police are at work. This matter will not be allowed to pass off without the closest investigation, believe me. I shall take care to have your statement placed in the hands of the detective officer who is entrusted with the conduct of this affair. We must wait : we must wait. I cannot bring myself to believe that Henry Dunbar has been guilty of this fearful crime. He is rich enough to have bribed your father to keep silence, if he had any reason to fear what he might say. Money is a very powerful agent, and can buy almost any thing. It is rarely that a man, with almost unlimited wealth at his command, finds himself compelled to commit an act of violence.”

The magistrate read aloud Margaret Wilmot's deposition, and the girl signed it in the presence of the clerk: she signed it with her father's real name: the name that she had never written before that day.

Then, having given the magistrate the address of her Wandsworth lodging, she bade him good-morning, and went out into the unfamiliar street.

Nothing that Sir Arden Westhorpe had said had in any way weakened her rooted conviction of Henry Dunbar's guilt. She still believed that he was the murderer of her father.

She walked for some distance without knowing where she went, then suddenly she stopped; her face flushed, her eyes grew bright, and an ominous smile lit up her countenance.

"I will go to Henry Dunbar," she said to herself, "since the law will not help me; I will go to my father's murderer. Surely he will tremble when he knows that his victim left a daughter, who will rest neither night nor day until she sees justice done."

Sir Arden had mentioned the hotel at which Henry Dunbar was staying ; so Margaret asked the first passer-by to direct her to the George.

She found a waiter lounging in the doorway of the hotel.

“ I want to see Mr. Dunbar,” she said.

The man looked at her with considerable surprise.

“ I don’t think it’s likely Mr. Dunbar will see you, miss,” he said ; “ but I’ll take your name up, if you wish it.”

“ I shall be much obliged if you will do so.”

“ Certainly, miss. If you’ll please to sit down in the hall, I’ll go to Mr. Dunbar immediately. Your name is——”

“ My name is Margaret Wilmot.”

The waiter started as if he had been shot.

“ Wilmot!” he exclaimed ; “ any relation to——”

“ I am the daughter of Joseph Wilmot,” answered Margaret, quietly. “ You can tell Mr. Dunbar so, if you please.”

“ Yes, miss ; I will, miss. Bless my soul ! You really might knock me down with a feather, miss.

Mr. Dunbar can't possibly refuse to see *you*, I should think, miss."

The waiter went up-stairs, looking back at Margaret as he went. He seemed to think that the daughter of the murdered man ought to be, in some way or other, different from other young women.

CHAPTER XV.

BAFFLED.

MR. DUNBAR was sitting in a luxurious easy-chair, with a newspaper lying across his knee. Mr. Balderby had returned to London upon the previous evening, but Arthur Lovell still remained with the Anglo-Indian.

Henry Dunbar was a good deal the worse for the close confinement which he had suffered since his arrival in the cathedral city. Everybody who looked at him saw the change which the last ten days had made in his appearance. He was very pale; there were dark purple rings about his eyes; the eyes themselves were unnaturally bright: and the mouth—that tell-tale feature, over whose expression no man has perfect control—betrayed that the banker had suffered.

Arthur Lovell had been indefatigable in the

service of his client: not from any love towards the man, but always influenced more or less by the reflection that Henry Dunbar was Laura's father; and that to serve Henry Dunbar was in some manner to serve the woman he loved.

Mr. Dunbar had only been discharged from custody upon the previous evening, after a long and wearisome examination and cross-examination of the witnesses who had given evidence at the coroner's inquest, and that additional testimony upon which the magistrate had issued his warrant. He had slept till late, and had only just finished breakfast, when the waiter entered with Margaret's message.

"A young person wishes to see you, sir," he said, respectfully.

"A young person!" exclaimed Mr. Dunbar, impatiently; "I can't see any one. What should any young person want with me?"

"She wants to see you particularly, sir; she says her name is Wilmot—Margaret Wilmot; and that she is the daughter of——"

The sickly pallor of Mr. Dunbar's face changed

to an awful livid hue : and Arthur Lovell, looking at his client at this moment, saw the change.

It was the first time he had seen any evidence of fear either in the face or manner of Henry Dunbar.

“ I will not see her,” exclaimed Mr. Dunbar ; “ I never heard Wilmot speak of any daughter. This woman is some impudent impostor, who wants to extort money out of me. I will not see her : let her be sent about her business.”

The waiter hesitated.

“ She is a very respectable-looking person, sir,” he said ; “ she doesn’t look any thing like an impostor.”

“ Perhaps not !” answered Mr. Dunbar, haughtily ; “ but she *is* an impostor, for all that. Joseph Wilmot had no daughter, to my knowledge. Pray do not let me be disturbed about this business. I have suffered quite enough already on account of this man’s death.”

He sank back in his chair, and took up his newspaper as he finished speaking. His face was completely hidden behind the newspaper.

“ Shall *I* go and speak to this girl ? ” asked Arthur Lovell.

“ On no account ! The girl is an impostor. Let her be sent about her business ! ”

The waiter left the room.

“ Pardon me, Mr. Dunbar,” said the young lawyer ; “ but if you will allow me to make a suggestion, as your legal adviser in this business, I would really recommend you to see this girl.”

“ Why ? ”

“ Because the people in a place like this are notorious gossips and scandal-mongers. If you refuse to see this person, who, at any rate, calls herself Joseph Wilmot’s daughter, they may say—”

“ They may say what ? ” asked Henry Dunbar.

“ They may say that it is because you have some special reason for not seeing her.”

“ Indeed, Mr. Lovell. Then I am to put myself out of the way—after being fagged and harassed to death already about this business—and am to see every adventuress who chooses to trade upon the name of the murdered man, in order to stop the mouths of the good people of Winchester.

I beg to tell you, my dear sir, that I am utterly indifferent to any thing that may be said of me : and that I shall only study my own ease and comfort. If people choose to think that Henry Dunbar is the murderer of his old servant, they are welcome to their opinion : I shall not trouble myself to set them right."

The waiter reëntered the room as Mr. Dunbar finished speaking.

"The young person says that she must see you, sir," the man said. "She says that if you refuse to see her, she will wait at the door of this house until you leave it. My master has spoken to her, sir; but it's no use: she's the most determined young woman I ever saw."

Mr. Dunbar's face was still hidden by the newspaper. There was a little pause before he replied.

"Lovell," he said at last, "perhaps you had better go and see this person. You can find out if she is really related to that unhappy man. Here is my purse. You can let her have any money you think proper. If she is the daughter of that

wretched man, I should, of course, wish her to be well provided for. I will thank you to tell her that, Lovell. Tell her that I am willing to settle an annuity upon her; always on condition that she does not intrude herself upon me. But remember, whatever I give is contingent upon her own good conduct, and must not in any way be taken as a bribe. If she chooses to think and speak ill of me, she is free to do so. I have no fear of her; nor of any one else."

Arthur Lovell took the millionaire's purse and went down stairs with the waiter. He found Margaret sitting in the hall. There was no impatience, no violence in her manner: but there was a steady, fixed, resolute look in her white face. The young lawyer felt that this girl would not be easily put off by any denial of Mr. Dunbar.

He ushered Margaret into a private sitting-room leading out of the hall, and then closed the door behind him. The disappointed waiter lingered upon the door-mat: but the George is a well-built house, and that waiter lingered in vain.

"You want to see Mr. Dunbar?" he said.

“ Yes, sir !”

“ He is very much fatigued by yesterday’s business, and he declines to see you. What is your motive for being so eager to see him ?”

“ I will tell that to Mr. Dunbar himself.”

“ You are *really* the daughter of Joseph Wilmot? Mr. Dunbar seems to doubt the fact of his having had a daughter.”

“ Perhaps so. Mr. Dunbar may have been unaware of my existence until this moment. I did not know until last night what had happened.”

She stopped for a moment, half-stifled by a hysterical sob, which she could not repress: but she very quickly regained her self-control, and continued, slowly and deliberately, looking earnestly in the young man’s face with her clear brown eyes, “ I did not know until last night that my father’s name was Wilmot; he had called himself by a false name—but last night, after hearing of the—the—murder”—the horrible word seemed to suffocate her, but she still went bravely on—
“ I searched a box of my father’s and found this.”

She took from her pocket the letter directed to Norfolk Island, and handed it to the lawyer.

“Read it,” she said; “you will see then how my father had been wronged by Henry Dunbar.”

Arthur Lovell unfolded the worn and faded letter. It had been written five-and-twenty years before by Sampson Wilmot. Margaret pointed to one passage on the second page.

“Your bitterness against Henry Dunbar is very painful to me, my dear Joseph; yet I cannot but feel that your hatred against my employer’s son is only natural. I know that he was the first cause of your ruin; and that, but for him, your lot in life might have been very different. Try to forgive him; try to forget him, even if you cannot forgive. Do not talk of revenge. The revelation of that secret which you hold respecting the forged bills would bring disgrace not only upon him, but upon his father and his uncle. They are both good and honourable men, and I think that shame would kill them. Remember this, and keep the secret of that painful story.”

Arthur Lovell’s face grew terribly grave as

he read these lines. He had heard the story of the forgery hinted at, but he had never heard its details. He had looked upon it as a cruel scandal, which had perhaps arisen out of some trifling error, some unpaid debt of honour; some foolish gambling transaction in the early youth of Henry Dunbar.

But here, in the handwriting of the dead clerk, here was the evidence of that old story. Those few lines in Sampson Wilmot's letter suggested a *motive*.

The young lawyer dropped into a chair, and sat for some minutes silently poring over the clerk's letter. He did not like Henry Dunbar. His generous young heart, which had yearned towards Laura's father, had sunk in his breast with a dull, chill feeling of disappointment, at his first meeting with the rich man.

Still, after carefully sifting the evidence of the coroner's inquest, he had come to the conclusion that Henry Dunbar was innocent of Joseph Wilmot's death. He had carefully weighed every scrap of evidence against the Anglo-In-

dian; and had deliberately arrived at this conclusion.

But now he looked at every thing in a new light. The clerk's letter suggested a motive, perhaps an adequate motive. The two men had gone down together into that silent grove, the servant had threatened his patron, they had quarrelled, and—

No! the murder could scarcely have happened in this way. The assassin had been armed with the cruel rope, and had crept stealthily behind his victim. It was not a common murder: the rope and the slip-knot, the treacherous running noose, hinted darkly at Oriental experiences: somewhat in this fashion might a murderous Thug have assailed his unconscious victim.

But then, on the other hand, there was one circumstance that always remained in Henry Dunbar's favour—that circumstance was the robbery of the dead man's clothes. The Anglo-Indian might very well have rifled the pocket-book, and left it empty upon the scene of the murder, in order to throw the officers of justice upon a

wrong scent. That would have been only the work of a few moments.

But was it probable—was it even possible—that the murderer would have lingered in broad daylight, with every chance against him, long enough to strip off the garments of his victim, in order still more effectually to hoodwink suspicion? Was it not a great deal more likely that Joseph Wilmot had spent the afternoon drinking in the tap-room of some roadside public-house, and had rambled back into the grove after dark, to meet his death at the hands of some everyday assassin, bent only upon plunder?

All these thoughts passed through Arthur Lovell's mind as he sat with Sampson's faded letter in his hands. Margaret Wilmot watched him with eager, scrutinising eyes. She saw doubt, perplexity, horror, indecision, all struggling in his handsome face.

But the lawyer felt that it was his duty to act, and to act in the interests of his client, whatever vaguely-hideous doubts might arise in his own breast. Nothing but his *conviction* of Henry

Dunbar's guilt could justify him in deserting his client. He was not convinced; he was only horror-stricken by the first whisper of doubt.

"Mr. Dunbar declines to see you," he said to Margaret; "and I do not really see what good could possibly arise out of an interview between you. In the mean time, if you are in any way distressed,—and you must most likely need assistance at such a time as this,—he is quite ready to help you: and he is also ready to give you permanent help if you require it."

He opened Henry Dunbar's purse as he spoke, but the girl rose and looked at him with icy disdain in her fixed white face.

"I would sooner crawl from door to door, begging my bread of the hardest strangers in this cruel world.—I would sooner die from the lingering agonies of starvation,—than I would accept help from Henry Dunbar. No power on earth will ever induce me to take a sixpence from that man's hand."

"Why not?"

"*You* know why not. I can see that know-

ledge in your face. Tell Mr. Dunbar that I will wait at the door of this house till he comes out to speak to me. I will wait until I drop down dead."

Arthur Lovell went back to his client, and told him what the girl said.

Mr. Dunbar was walking up and down the room, with his head bent moodily upon his breast.

"By heavens!" he cried, angrily, "I will have this girl removed by the police, if—"

He stopped abruptly, and his head sank once more upon his breast.

"I would most earnestly advise you to see her," pleaded Arthur Lovell; "if she goes away in her present frame of mind, she may spread a horrible scandal against you. Your refusing to see her will confirm the suspicions which—"

"What!" cried Henry Dunbar; "does she dare to suspect me?"

"I fear so."

"Has she said as much?"

"Not in actual words. But her manner be-

trayed her suspicions. You must not wonder if this girl is unreasonable. Her father's miserable fate must have been a terrible blow to her."

"Did you offer her money?"

"I did."

"And she—"

"She refused it."

Mr. Dunbar winced, as if the announcement of the girl's refusal had stung him to the quick.

"Since it must be so," he said, "I will see this importunate woman. But not to-day. To-day I must and will have rest. Tell her to come to me to-morrow morning at ten o'clock. I will see her then."

Arthur Lovell carried this message to Margaret.

The girl looked at him with an earnest, questioning glance.

"You are not deceiving me?" she said.

"No, indeed."

"Mr. Dunbar said that?"

"He did."

"Then I will go away. But do not let Henry

Dunbar try to deceive me! for I will follow him to the end of the world. I care very little where I go in my search for the man who murdered my father!"

She went slowly away. She went down into the cathedral yard, across which the murdered man had gone arm-in-arm with his companion. Some boys, loitering about at the entrance to the meadows, answered all her questions, and took her to the spot upon which the body had been found.

It was a dull, misty day, and there was a low wind wailing amongst the wet branches of the old trees. The rain-drops from the fading leaves fell into the streamlet, from whose shallow waters the dead man's face had looked up to the moonlit sky.

Later in the afternoon, Margaret found her way to a cemetery outside the town, where, under a newly-made mound of turf, the murdered man lay.

A great many people had been to see this grave, and had been very much disappointed at finding it in no way different from other graves.

Already the good citizens of Winchester had begun to hint that the grove near St. Cross was haunted ; and there was a vague report to the effect that the dead man had been seen there, walking in the twilight.

Punctual to the very striking of the clock, Margaret Wilmot presented herself at the George at the time appointed by Mr. Dunbar.

She had passed a wretched night at a humble inn a little way out of the town, and had been dreaming all night of her meeting with Mr. Dunbar. In those troubled dreams she had met the rich man perpetually : now in one place, now in another : but always in the most unlikely places : yet she had never seen his face. She had tried to see it ; but by some strange devilry or other, peculiar to the incidents of a dream, it had been always hidden from her.

The same waiter was lounging in the same attitude at the door of the hotel. He looked up with an expression of surprise as Margaret approached him.

“ You’ve not gone, then, miss ? ” he exclaimed.

“Gone! No! I have waited to see Mr. Dunbar!”

“Well, that’s queer,” said the waiter; “did he tell you he’d see you?”

“Yes, he promised to see me at ten o’clock this morning.”

“That’s uncommon queer.”

“Why so?” asked Margaret, eagerly.

“Because Mr. Dunbar, and that young gent as was with him, went away, bag and baggage, by last night’s express.”

Margaret Wilmot gave no utterance to either surprise or indignation. She walked quietly away, and went once more to the house of Sir Arden Westhorpe. She told him what had occurred, and her statement was written down and signed, as upon the previous day.

“Mr. Dunbar murdered my father!” she said, after this had been done; “and he’s afraid to see me!”

The magistrate shook his head gravely.

“No, no, my dear,” he said; “you must not say that. I cannot allow you to make such an

assertion as that. Circumstantial evidence often points to an innocent person. If Mr. Dunbar had been in any way concerned in this matter, he would have made a point of seeing you, in order to set your suspicions at rest. His declining to see you is only the act of a selfish man, who has already suffered very great inconvenience from this business, and who dreads the scandal of some tragical scene."

CHAPTER XVI.

IS IT LOVE OR FEAR?

HENRY DUNBAR and Arthur Lovell slept at the same hotel upon the night of their journey from Winchester to London; for the banker refused to disturb his daughter by presenting himself at the house in Portland Place after midnight.

In this, at least, he showed himself a considerate father.

Arthur Lovell had made every effort in his power to dissuade the banker from leaving Winchester upon that night, and thus breaking the promise that he had made to Margaret Wilmot. Henry Dunbar was resolute; and the young lawyer had no alternative. If his client chose to do a dishonourable thing, in spite of all that the young man could say against it, of course it was no business of his. For his own part, Arthur Lovell

was only too glad to get back to London; for Laura Dunbar was there: and wherever she was, there was Paradise, in the opinion of this foolish young man.

Early upon the morning after their arrival in London, Henry Dunbar and the young lawyer breakfasted together in their sitting-room at the hotel. It was a bright morning, and even London looked pleasant in the sunshine. Henry Dunbar stood in the window looking out into the street below while the breakfast was being placed upon the table. The hotel was situated in a new street at the West End.

“You find London very much altered, I dare say, Mr. Dunbar?” said Arthur Lovell, as he unfolded the morning paper.

“How do you mean altered?” asked the banker, absently.

“I mean, that after so long an absence you must find great improvements. This street for instance—it has not been built six years.”

“Oh, yes, I remember. There were fields upon this spot when I went to India.”

They sat down to breakfast. Henry Dunbar was absent-minded, and ate very little. When he had drunk a cup of tea, he took out the locket containing Laura's miniature, and sat silently contemplating it.

By and by he unfastened the locket from the chain, and handed it across the table to Arthur Lovell.

"My daughter is very beautiful, if she is like that," said the banker; "do you consider it a good likeness?"

The young lawyer looked at the portrait with a tender smile.

"Yes," he said thoughtfully, "it is very like her—only——"

"Only what?"

"The picture is not lovely enough."

"Indeed! and yet it is very beautiful. Laura resembles her mother, who was a lovely woman."

"But I have heard your father say, that the lower part of Miss Dunbar's face—the mouth and chin—reminded him of your's. I must own, Mr. Dunbar, that I cannot see the likeness."

“I daresay not,” the banker answered, carelessly; “you must allow something for the passage of time, my dear Lovell, and the wear and tear of a life in Calcutta. I daresay my mouth and chin are rather harder and sterner in their character than Laura’s.”

There was nothing more said upon the subject of the likeness; by and by Mr. Dunbar got up, took his hat, and went towards the door.

“You will come with me, Lovell,” he said.

“Oh, no, Mr. Dunbar. I would not wish to intrude upon you at such a time. The first interview between a father and daughter, after a separation of so many years, is almost sacred in its character. I——”

“Pshaw, Mr. Lovell! I did not think a solicitor’s son would be weak enough to indulge in any silly sentimentality. I shall be very glad to see my daughter; and I understand from her letters that she will be pleased to see me. That is all! At the same time, as you know Laura much better than I do, you may as well come with me.”

Mr. Dunbar’s looks belied the carelessness of

his words. His face was deadly pale, and there was a singularly rigid expression about his mouth.

Laura had received no notice of her father's coming. She was sitting at the same window by which she had sat when Arthur Lovell asked her to be his wife. She was sitting in the same low luxurious easy-chair, with the hot-house flowers behind her, and a huge Newfoundland dog,—a faithful attendant, that she had brought from Maudesley Abbey,—lying at her feet.

The door of Miss Dunbar's morning-room was open: and upon the broad landing-place outside the apartment the banker stopped suddenly, and laid his hand upon the gilded balustrade. For a moment it seemed almost as if he would have fallen: but he leaned heavily upon the bronze scroll-work of the banister, and bit his lower-lip fiercely with his strong white teeth. Arthur Lovell was not displeased to perceive this agitation: for he had been wounded by the careless manner in which Henry Dunbar had spoken of his beautiful daughter. Now it was evident that the banker's indifference had only been assumed as a mask

beneath which the strong man had tried to conceal the intensity of his feelings.

The two men lingered upon the landing-place for a few minutes; while Mr. Dunbar looked about him, and endeavoured to control his agitation. Every thing here was new to him: for neither the house in Portland Place, nor Maudesley Abbey, had been in the possession of the Dunbar family more than twenty years.

The millionaire contemplated his possessions. Even upon that landing-place there was no lack of evidence of wealth. A Persian carpet covered the centre of the floor, and beyond its fringed margin a tessellated pavement of coloured marbles took new and brighter hues from the slanting rays of sunlight that streamed in through a wide stained-glass window upon the staircase. Great Dresden vases of exotics stood upon pedestals of malachite and gold: and a trailing curtain of purple velvet hung half-way across the entrance to a long suite of drawing-rooms—a glistening vista of light and splendour.

Mr. Dunbar pushed open the door, and stood

upon the threshold of his daughter's chamber. Laura started to her feet.

“ Papa!—papa!” she cried; “ I thought that you would come to-day !”

She ran to him and fell upon his breast, half-weeping, half-laughing. The Newfoundland dog crept up to Mr. Dunbar with his head down: he sniffed at the heels of the millionaire, and then looked slowly upward at the man's face with sombre sulky-looking eyes, and began to growl ominously.

“ Take your dog away, Laura !” cried Mr. Dunbar, angrily.

It happened thus that the very first words Henry Dunbar said to his daughter were uttered in a tone of anger.

The girl drew herself away from him, and looked up almost piteously in her father's face. That face was as pale as death: but cold, stern, and impassible. Laura Dunbar shivered as she looked at it. She had been a spoilt child; a pampered, idolised beauty; and had never heard any thing but words of love and tenderness. Her

lips quivered, and the tears came into her eyes.

“Come away, Pluto,” she said to the dog; “papa does not want us.”

She took the great flapping ears of the animal in her two hands, and led him out of the room. The dog went with his young mistress submissively enough: but he looked back at the last moment to growl at Mr. Dunbar.

Laura left the Newfoundland on the landing-place, and went back to her father. She flung herself for the second time into the banker's arms.

“Darling papa,” she cried impetuously: “my dog shall never growl at you again. Dear papa, tell me you are glad to come home to your poor girl. You *would* tell me so, if you knew how dearly I love you.”

She lifted up her lips and kissed Henry Dunbar's impassible face. But she recoiled from him for the second time with a shudder and a long-drawn, shivering sigh. The lips of the millionaire were as cold as ice.

“ Papa,” she cried, “ how cold you are ! I’m afraid that you are ill ! ”

He was ill. Arthur Lovell, who stood quietly watching the meeting between the father and daughter, saw a change come over his client’s face, and wheeled forward an arm-chair just in time for Henry Dunbar to fall into it as heavily as a log of wood.

The banker had fainted. For the second time since the murder in the grove near St. Cross he had betrayed violent and sudden emotion. This time the emotion was stronger than his will, and altogether overcame him.

Arthur Lovell laid the insensible man flat upon his back on the carpet. Laura rushed to fetch water and aromatic vinegar from her dressing-room : and in five minutes Mr. Dunbar opened his eyes, and looked about him with a wild, half-terrified expression in his face. For a moment he glared fiercely at the anxious countenance of Laura, who knelt beside him : then his whole frame was shaken by a convulsive trembling, and his teeth chattered violently. But this lasted only for a few

moments. He overcame it: grinding his teeth, and clenching his strong hands: and then staggered heavily to his feet.

“I am subject to these fainting fits,” he said, with a wan, sickly smile upon his white face; “and I dreaded this interview on that account: I knew that it would be too much for me.”

He seated himself upon the low sofa which Laura had pushed towards him, resting his elbows on his knees, and hiding his face in his hands. Miss Dunbar placed herself beside her father, and wound her arm about his neck.

“Poor papa,” she murmured, softly; “I am so sorry our meeting has agitated you like this: and to think that I should have fancied you cold and unkind to me, at the very time when your silent emotion was an evidence of your love!”

Arthur Lovell had gone through the open window into the conservatory: but he could hear the girl talking to her father. His face was very grave: and the same shadow that had clouded it once

during the course of the coroner's inquest rested upon it now.

“ ‘An evidence of his love!’ Heaven grant this may be love,” he thought to himself; “ but to me it seems a great deal more like fear !”

CHAPTER XVII.

THE BROKEN PICTURE.

ARTHUR LOVELL stopped at Portland Place for the rest of the day, and dined with the banker and his daughter in the evening. The dinner-party was a very cheerful one, as far as Mr. Dunbar and his daughter were concerned: for Laura was in very high spirits on account of her father's return, and Dora Macmahon joined pleasantly in the conversation. The banker had welcomed his dead wife's elder daughter with a speech which, if a little studied in its tone, was at any rate very kind in its meaning.

“I shall always be glad to see you with my poor motherless girl,” he said; “and if you can make your home altogether with us, you shall never have cause to remember that you are less nearly allied to me than Laura herself.”

When he met Arthur and the two girls at the dinner-table, Henry Dunbar had quite recovered from the agitation of the morning, and talked gaily of the future. He alluded now and then to his Indian reminiscences, but did not dwell long upon this subject. His mind seemed full of plans for his future life. He would do this, that, and the other, at Maudesley Abbey, in Yorkshire, and in Portland Place. He had the air of a man who fully appreciates the power of wealth; and is prepared to enjoy all that wealth can give him. He drank a good deal of wine during the course of the dinner, and his spirits rose with every glass.

But in spite of his host's gaiety, Arthur Lovell was ill at ease. Do what he would, he could not shake off the memory of the meeting between the father and daughter. Henry Dunbar's deadly pallor—that wild, scared look in his eyes, as they slowly reopened and glared upon Laura's anxious face—were ever present to the young lawyer's mind.

Why was this man frightened of his beautiful child?—for that it was fear, and not love, which had blanched Henry Dunbar's face, the lawyer felt

positive. Why was this father frightened of his own daughter, unless—?

Unless what?

Only one horrible and ghastly suggestion presented itself to Arthur Lovell's mind. Henry Dunbar was the murderer of his old valet: and the consciousness of guilt had paralysed him at the first touch of his daughter's innocent lips.

But, oh, how terrible if this were true—how terrible to think that Laura Dunbar was henceforth to live in daily and hourly association with a traitor and an assassin!

“I have promised to love her for ever, though my love is hopeless, and to serve her faithfully if ever she should have need of my devotion,” Arthur Lovell thought, as he sat silent at the dinner-table, while Henry Dunbar and his daughter talked together gaily.

The lawyer watched his client now with intense anxiety; and it seemed to him that there was something feverish and unnatural in the banker's gaiety. Laura and her step-sister left the room soon after dinner: and the two men remained alone at

the long, ponderous-looking dinner-table, on which the sparkling diamond-cut decanters and Sèvres dessert-dishes looked like tiny vases of light and colour on a dreary waste of polished mahogany.

“I shall go to Maudesley Abbey to-morrow,” Henry Dunbar said. “I want rest and solitude after all this trouble and excitement: and Laura tells me that she infinitely prefers Maudesley to London. Do you think of returning to Warwickshire, Mr. Lovell?”

“Oh, yes, immediately. My father expected my return a week ago. I only came up to town to act as Miss Dunbar’s escort.”

“Indeed, that was very kind of you. You have known my daughter for a long time, I understand by her letters.”

“Yes. We were children together. I was a great deal at the Abbey in old Mr. Dunbar’s time.”

“And you will be still more often there in my time, I hope,” Henry Dunbar answered courteously. “I fancy I could venture to make a pretty correct guess at a certain secret of yours, my dear

Lovell. Unless I am very much mistaken, you have a more than ordinary regard for my daughter."

Arthur Lovell was silent, his heart beat violently, and he looked the banker unflinchingly in the face: but he did not speak, he only bent his head in answer to the rich man's question.

"I have guessed rightly, then," said Mr. Dunbar.

"Yes, sir, I love Miss Dunbar as truly as ever a man loved the woman of his choice; but—"

"But what? She is the daughter of a millionaire, and you fear her father's disapproval of your pretensions, eh?"

"No, Mr. Dunbar. If your daughter loved me as truly as I love her, I would marry her in spite of you—in spite of the world; and carve my own way to fortune. But such a blessing as Laura Dunbar's love is not for me. I have spoken to her, and—"

"She has rejected you."

"She has."

"Pshaw! girls of her age are as changeable as

the winds of heaven. Do not despair, Mr. Lovell; and as far as my consent goes, you may have it to-morrow, if you like. You are young, good-looking, clever, agreeable: what more, in the name of feminine frivolity, can a girl want? You will find no stupid prejudices in me, Mr. Lovell. I should like to see you married to my daughter: for I believe you love her very sincerely. You have my good will, I assure you. There is my hand upon it."

He held out his hand as he spoke, and Arthur Lovell took it, a little reluctantly perhaps, but with as good a grace as he could.

"I thank you, sir," he said, "for your good will, and—"

He tried to say something more, but the words died away upon his lips. The horrible fear which had taken possession of his breast after the scene of the morning, weighed upon him like the burden that seems to lie upon the sleeper's breast throughout the strange agony of nightmare. Do what he would, he could not free himself from the weight of this dreadful doubt. Mr. Dunbar's words *seemed*

to emanate from the kind and generous breast of a good man : but on the other hand, might it not be possible that the banker wished to *get rid* of his daughter ?

He had betrayed fear in her presence, that morning : and now he was eager to give her hand to the first suitor who presented himself : ineligible as that suitor was in a worldly point of view. Might it not be that the girl's innocent society was oppressive to her father : and that he wished therefore to shuffle her off upon a new protector ?

“ I shall be very busy this evening, Mr. Lovell,” said Henry Dunbar, presently ; “ for I must look over some papers I have amongst the luggage that was sent on here from Southampton. When you are tired of the dining-room, you will be able to find the two girls, and amuse yourself in their society, I have no doubt.”

Mr. Dunbar rang the bell. It was answered by an elderly man-servant out of livery.

“ What have you done with the luggage that was sent from Southampton ? ” asked the banker.

“It has all been placed in old Mr. Dunbar’s bed-room, sir,” the man answered.

“Very well; let lights be carried there, and let the portmanteaus and packing-cases be unstrapped and opened.”

He handed a bunch of keys to the servant, and followed the man out of the room. In the hall he stopped suddenly, arrested by the sound of a woman’s voice.

The entrance-hall of the house in Portland Place was divided into two compartments, separated from each other by folding-doors, the upper panels of which were of ground glass. There was a porter’s chair in the outer division of the hall, and a bronzed lamp hung from the domed ceiling.

The doors between the inner and outer hall were ajar, and the voice which Henry Dunbar heard was that of a woman speaking to the porter.

“I am Joseph Wilmot’s daughter,” the woman said. “Mr. Dunbar promised that he would see me at Winchester: he broke his word, and left

Winchester without seeing me : but he *shall* see me, sooner or later : for I will follow him wherever he goes, until I look into his face, and say that which I have to say to him."

The girl did not speak loudly or violently. There was a quiet earnestness in her voice ; an earnestness and steadiness of tone which expressed more determination than any noisy or passionate utterance could have done.

" Good gracious me, young woman ! " exclaimed the porter, " do you think as I'm goin' to send such a rampagin' kind of a message as that to Mr. Dunbar ? Why, it would be as much as my place is worth to do it. Go along about your business, miss ; and don't you preshume to come to such a house as this durin' gentlefolks' dinner-hours another time. Why, I'd sooner take a message to one of the tigers in the Joological-gardings at feedin' time than I'd intrude upon such a gentleman as Mr. Dunbar when he's sittin' over his claret."

Mr. Dunbar stopped to listen to this conversation ; then he went back into the dining-room, and

beckoned to the servant who was waiting to precede him upstairs.

“Bring me pen, ink, and paper,” he said.

The man wheeled a writing-table towards the banker. Henry Dunbar sat down and wrote the following lines; in the firm, aristocratic handwriting that was so familiar to the chief clerks in the banking-house.

“The young person who calls herself Joseph Wilmot’s daughter is informed that Mr. Dunbar declines to see her now or at any future time. He is perfectly inflexible upon this point; and the young person will do well to abandon the system of annoyance which she is at present pursuing. Should she fail to do so, a statement of her conduct will be submitted to the police, and prompt measures taken to secure Mr. Dunbar’s freedom from persecution. Herewith Mr. Dunbar forwards the young person a sum of money which will enable her to live for some time with ease and independence. Further remittances will be sent to her at short intervals; if she conducts herself with

propriety, and refrains from attempting any annoyance against Mr. Dunbar.

“Portland Place, August 30, 1850.”

The banker took out his cheque-book, wrote a cheque for fifty pounds, and folded it in the note which he had just written: then he rang the bell, and gave the note to the elderly man-servant who waited upon him.

“Let that be taken to the young person in the hall,” he said.

Mr. Dunbar followed the servant to the dining-room door, and stood upon the threshold listening. He heard the man speak to Margaret Wilmot as he delivered the letter; and then he heard the crackling of the envelope, as the girl tore it open.

There was a pause, during which the listener waited, with an anxious expression on his face.

He had not to wait long. Margaret spoke presently, in a clear, ringing voice, that vibrated through the hall.

“Tell your master,” she said, “that I will die

of starvation sooner than I would accept bread from his hand. You can tell him what I did with his generous gift."

There was another brief pause; and then, in the hushed stillness of the house, Henry Dunbar heard a light shower of torn paper flutter down upon the polished marble floor. Then he heard the great door of the house close upon Joseph Wilmot's daughter.

The millionaire covered his face with his hands, and gave a long sigh: but he lifted his head presently, shrugged his shoulders with an impatient gesture, and went slowly up the lighted staircase.

The suite of apartments that had been occupied by Percival Dunbar comprised the greater part of the second floor of the house in Portland Place. There was a spacious bed-chamber, a comfortable study, a dressing-room, bath-room, and ante-chamber. The furniture was handsome, but of a ponderous style: and, in spite of their splendour, the rooms had a gloomy look. Every thing about them was dark and heavy. The house was an old

one, and the five windows fronting the street were long and narrow, with deep oaken seats in the recesses between the heavy shutters. The walls were covered with a dark-green paper that looked like cloth. The footsteps of the occupant were muffled by the rich thickness of the sombre Turkey carpet. The voluminous curtains that sheltered the windows, and shrouded the carved rosewood four-post bed, were of a dark green, which looked black in the dim light.

The massive chairs and tables were of black oak, with cushions of green velvet. A few valuable cabinet pictures, by the old masters, set in deep frames of ebony and gold, hung at wide distances upon the wall. There was the head of an Ecclesiastic cut from a large picture by Spagnoletti; a Venetian senator by Tintoretto; the Adoration of the Magi by Caravaggio. An ivory crucifix was the only object upon the high, old-fashioned chimney-piece.

A pair of wax candles, in antique silver candlesticks, burned upon a writing-table near the fire-place, and made a spot of light in

the gloomy bedchamber. All Henry Dunbar's luggage had been placed in this room. There were packing-cases and portmanteaus of almost every size and shape, and they had all been opened by a man-servant, who was kneeling by the last when the banker entered the room.

"You will sleep here to-night, sir, I presume?" the servant said, interrogatively, as he prepared to quit the apartment. "Mrs. Parkyn thought it best to prepare these rooms for your occupation."

Henry Dunbar looked thoughtfully round the spacious chamber.

"Is there no other place in which I can sleep?" he asked. "These rooms are horribly gloomy."

"There is a spare room upon the floor above this, sir."

"Very well; let the spare room be got ready for me. I have a good many arrangements to make, and shall be late."

"Will you require assistance, sir?"

“No. Let the room upstairs be prepared. Is it immediately above this?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Good; I shall know how to find it, then. No one need sit up for me. Let Miss Dunbar be told that I shall not see her again to-night, and that I shall start for Maudesley in the course of to-morrow. She can make her arrangements accordingly. You understand?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Then you can go. Remember, I do not wish to be disturbed again to-night.”

“You will want nothing more, sir?”

“Nothing.”

The man retired. Henry Dunbar followed him to the door, listened to his receding footsteps in the corridor and upon the staircase, and then turned the key in the lock. He went back to the centre of the room, and kneeling down before one of the open portmanteaus, took out every article which it contained, slowly; removing the things one by one, and throwing most of them into a heap upon the floor. He went through this ope-

ration with the contents of all the boxes, throwing the clothes upon the floor, and carrying the papers to the writing table, where he piled them up in a great mass. This business occupied a very long time, and the hands of an antique clock, upon a bracket in a corner of the room, pointed to midnight when the banker seated himself at the table, and began to arrange and sort his papers.

This operation lasted for several hours. The candles were burnt down, and the flames flickered slowly out in the silver sockets. Mr. Dunbar went to one of the windows, drew back the green-cloth curtain, unbarred the heavy shutters, and let the gray morning light into the room. But he still went on with his work : reading faded documents, tying up old papers, making notes upon the backs of letters, and other notes in his own memorandum-book : very much as he had done at the Winchester Hotel. The broad sunlight streamed in upon the sombre colours of the Turkey carpet, the sound of wheels was in the street below, when the banker's work was finished. By that time he had

arranged all the papers with unusual precision, and replaced them in one of the portmanteaus: but he left the clothes in a careless heap upon the floor, just as they had fallen when he first threw them out of the boxes.

Mr. Dunbar did one thing more before he left the room. Amongst the papers which he had arranged upon the writing-table, there was a small square morocco-case, containing a photograph done upon glass. He took this picture out of the case, dropped it upon the polished oaken floor beyond the margin of the carpet, and ground the glass into atoms with the heavy heel of his boot. But even then he was not content with his work of destruction: for he stamped upon the tiny fragments until there was nothing left of the picture but a handful of sparkling dust. He scattered this about with his foot, dropped the empty morocco-case into his pocket, and went up-stairs in the morning sunlight.

It was past six o'clock, and Mr. Dunbar heard the voices of the women-servants upon the back-staircase as he went to his room. He threw him-

self, dressed as he was, upon the bed, and fell into a heavy slumber.

At three o'clock the next day Mr. Dunbar left London for Maudesley Abbey, accompanied by his daughter, Dora Macmahon, and Arthur Lovell.

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